THE CAUSE & CURE OF Offences: IN A DISCOURSE On *MATTH.* 18. 7.

BY

R. Kingston, M. A. Prebendary of *Sar.* and Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty.

1 Cor. 10.32. *Give no offence to the Jew nor to the Gentile, nor to the Church of God.*

Rom. 16. 17. *Mark them that cause divisions and offences, contrary to the Doctrine ye have learned, and avoid them.*

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BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

To the Right Worshipful

SAMUEL ASTRY Esq;

His Majesties Coroner, and Attorney in His Majesties Court of Kings-Bench, and one of His Majesties Justices of the Peace for the County of Glouceſter.

SIR,

HO. I have ſo deep a Reſentment of thoſe many & extraordinary Favours which you have been pleas'd to confer upon me, that I know it impoſſible to make any proportionable retaliation, and think it would be alſo more than

a venial sin, to offer such a violence to Gratitude, as not to acknowledge them with all Thankfulness; yet I must assure you and all the World, the Arguments which prevail'd with me for this Dedication, were fetch'd from Topicks of a far different nature. The Discourse is of a Pious and Publick Concernment, and therefore no other Patron could be more sutable, than one of such a Sober and Well-temper'd Zeal, and that with such a prudent care of the Publick Peace

Peace and common good adorn your Station, as all that know you must bear witness to.

The Cure of *Offences*, and an endeavour to recover the Age from the Mischiefs of Misunderstanding & prejudice, and settle it in a harmonious peace, and united Devotion, will not go under any other Patronage, than of so Loyal a Subject to his Majesty, a hearty well-wisher to the Doctrine & Discipline of the Church of *England*, and one that by Inclination, as well as Au-

Authority, is an enemy to all that of malitious wickedness offend againſt either.

Neither do I fear hereby to derive (from the moſt invidious perſon) any envy upon you, or the imputation of flattery upon my ſelf; ſince it is a well-known Maxime, that Honour as a ſhadow flies the purſuer, but follows him cloſe that flies from it: and among thankful men, Deſert will ſooner be deſeried where it obſcures it ſelf, and publiſhed with greater applauſe the leſs it is affected. Sir,

Sir, If these few and unpolish'd Papers, that in all Humility and Thankfulness, and as a lasting Testimony of my due Respects I here offer to you, may be serviceable to the Public, in reducing Dissenters to a Venerable Esteem of our Church, and an unanimous embracing all its Holy Sanctions, I have accomplish'd my end; and hope to obtain your pardon for making use of your Name to countenance this honest Design:

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in confidence whereof, I ſhall never ceaſe to implore the Bleſſings of Heaven for your ſelf, your Virtuous Conſort, and all your hopeful Iſſue; and take leave to aſſume the Honour of being

Worthy Sir,

Your moſt Humble, Obedient, and thankful Servant,

RICH. KINGSTON.

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THE CAUSE and CURE OF Offences.

St. *MATTH.* 18. 7.

Wo be to the man by whom the offence cometh.

THE Disciples of the holy and blessed Jesus, hearing their Royal Master discourse of his Death and Passion, like *Alexander's* Captains, every man looks for a Seigniory: somebody they think must be Lord-Deputy on Earth, when Christ is gone to his Glory; and therefore ambitiously enquire, who should be the person dignified with superiority in that Kingdom of Mark 9.31

the *Meſſias*, which they ſuppos'd would now be erected upon earth. One thinks his Merit ſhall prefer him; another, his Intimacy; another, his Affinity; another, his Seniority: but our Saviour, who knew their Thoughts, and underſtood their unwarrantable Deſignes was after worldly Gain, and ſecular Grandeur, drives them from that unhallowed inqueſt with Words and Signs too. Firſt,

35 With a *Word* of Admoniſhment, *The greateſt among you muſt be as one that ſerves*: and unleſs they lowred thoſe aſpiring thoughts, and abandoned their ambitious deſigns after Greatneſs, they could not *enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*; they could not truly and indeed be his Diſciples, or deſerve the very name of Chriſtians. As if he had ſaid, Should your Gifts and Graces prefer you, ſhould you obtain what you wiſh, and be the uppermoſt Garments in the myſtical Body of Chriſt; yet may you not contemn or deſpiſe your Underlings. But on the contrary, the greater dignity you acquire, the more ſervice will be expected; the larger portion

of

of Favour is beſtowed, the higher Obligation lies on you to be beneficial to others; for herein you comply with the grand deſign of eternal goodneſs, who is unwilling the meaneſt perſon on earth ſhould be loſt, that might with our indulgent and charitable methods be recovered to the knowledge and exerciſe of Godlineſs.

The next warning is by a *Sign*. A little Child coming in his way, our Saviour ſets him in the midſt of his haughty followers; ſaying, Unleſs they became as little Children in their innocency and unconcernedneſs, Heaven was no place for them. As if he had thus reproved their ſinful affectation of Dominion: You that aſpire to the higheſt place in my Kingdom, if you perſevere ſo diametrically oppoſite to the Laws of Chriſtianity, the loweſt Claſs will be too good for you. And leſt ſuch eminent Grandees ſhould ſcorn to take their Copy from a Childs hand, he tells them in what eſteem theſe Punies are with him; *Receive a little one,* (ſaith our Saviour) *and you receive me: offend a little one, and you*

offend me. Beware then, whoever you are that pretend to belong to Christ, that you make not the fall of others, steps for your selves to rise by: That being great men, or having advantage by Authority, or the luckiness of befriended Circumstances, that you wrong not, nor offend, the genuine Babes of Christ, and instead of a temporal Happiness, incur an endless Wo: *For wo is to the man by whom the offence cometh.*

Which words are the denuntiation of *a sad Curse* against those that *scandalize* or *offend* Christ's little ones: Yet notwithstanding our duty is so plainly explicated and represented in Gloss, and Case, by the several Commentaries of St. *Paul* upon this commination of our blessed Saviour; the words being misunderstood by the Ignorant, and misapplied by the Litigious, I hope it will not be thought waste of time to explain them.

Aristoph. Suidas Lexic. voc. Σκάνδαλα.

The Greek Grammarians tell us the word Σκάνδαλον properly signifies the *Prop* or little piece of wood in a *Trap* or *Pitfal*, that supports the device, and being touch'd lets it fall; but I suppose naturally hath a more general

general Notion, and ſignifies any thing that makes one halt, or limp, or that occaſions a man to *ſtumble* or *fall*, from σκάζω, σκαδῶ to *halt*, σκάνδαλον as from κάπτω, κύβω, κύμβαλον and ſuch like; wherefore 'tis rendred ſometimes a *Stumbling-block*, that which in Hebrew מכשול, and St. *Peter* expreſſes by another Greek word, πρόσκομμα. it denotes then any thing done by us, whereby another is hindred in his courſe of piety, in his way to Heaven. So that to *ſcandalize* or *offend*, is to diſcourage, grieve, or afflict them, to ſtagger, and make them doubtful in their thoughts of Religion; and by our Advice, or Example, to miſlead them from vertuous courſes, and to encourage others in ſinful practice.

What this *Woe* or *Curſe* was which our Saviour denounc'd againſt offenders, we may eaſily underſtand by taking our meaſures from the ſixth Verſe: For our Saviour could not meet with a Metaphor near home to expreſs the horror of his indignation and reſentment by: It ſeems the *four Capital puniſhments* uſed by the Jews, were too faint colours to de-

lineate his frightful figure with, and therefore borrows a word from the Syriac Tongue, whose custom it was in notorious cases to drown Malefactors; *He that offends one of these little ones*, (saith our Saviour) *it were good for him that a Milstone was hanged about his neck, and he drowned in the depth of the Sea*, εν τῳ πέλαγει τῆς θαλάσσης, when the repeating the same thing in two Synonymous words, much aggravates the sence. Thus *Aristophanes* his *Scholiast* informs us, that the *Grecians* when they inflicted this punishment, put a weight upon the criminals Neck: And our Saviour, to shew how much he is offended at the offence given to his little ones, appoints the weight to be a Milstone of the largest size, μύλος ὀνικὸς, *Mola jumentaria*, such a one as was usually turned about by the help of Asses, which might sink him to the lowest Abyss of misery.

Now this being compared with the words of the Text, it acquaints us, that the heavyest Woe, the bittrest Curse, and the hottest place in Hell, is appointed for *the man by whom the offence cometh*. For though it must needs

needs be that offences come, yet Gods wise permission of them does not hinder his just vengeance upon them, as not laying any necessity upon the will of man, and consequently not lessening his Guilt or penalty.

St. *Jerom* hath told us, that this doom pointed at *Judas* alone, by whose suddain and traiterous Plot, as our Saviour forewarned, all should be offended. But what need we settle it upon one man, when the foregoing words tell us, that the whole world is *full of offenders*, full of offences; corporeal offences, which holy *David* was beset with, Traps, and Snares in his way; spiritual offences, which the Prophet *Malachi* spy'd, when *men were made to stumble at Gods Law.* In Commentar. Matth. 18.

These are of two sorts; *active*, or *passive*: active, of themselves, or by accident. Of themselves, so *when the work and intent both are vicious.* So by accident, *when a good work appears evil, or fails in some needful circumstance.*

Passive offences are *taken* or *given.* Given, by the broad offences of others: Taken, by our own Malice:

One, the offence of the *little ones*; The other, the offence of the *Phariſees*. The one attended with a *væ*, the other with a *Sinite*: Wo be to thoſe that *give* the little ones an offence; but if the Phariſee *take* an offence where none is given, *wo be to himſelf*.

To lay open the terms in a word; the little one is a *weak Chriſtian*; the *offence*, an obſtruction or impediment in the way of his Salvation; the *wo*, an *endleſs torment*.

Now to rive this great *Block* in ſunder, we ſhall find ſeveral pieces big enough to *ſtumble* at; big enough to kindle an everlaſting fire, to bring an everlaſting *wo* upon us: whether we conſider the deportment of our *Tongues* or our *Lives*, *offences* are given by both.

I will begin with a *mad Engine*, that lies in a wet place, yet vomits fire. The *venome* of other creatures are in their Tail, but the poyſon of man is in his *Tongue*: There are men that *have adders poyſon under their lips*; whoſe ſole employment is in miſchievous words; giving a looſe to a dangerous precipitancy,

Pſal. 52. 4.

where they ſhould uſe the curb of a religious reſtraint. St. *James* out of our own mouths will inform us, that the leaſt part of our ſelves gives the loudeſt report. *The Tongue is a little Member, but boaſteth great things.* Jam. 3. 5. If the Soul be puffed up with haughtineſs, it is the *Tongue* that ſpeaketh *proud things*; and when the thoughts are conſpiring into a Mutiny and cloſe Rebellion, at laſt they burſt out, *With our Tongues we will prevail; who is Lord over us?* Pſal. 30. 12. To what unholy and irreligious purpoſes is that uſeful faculty of Speech perverted, and that which was deſign'd for the benefit of Mankind, become the common diſturber thereof? that we have great cauſe to conclude with St. *James, If any man offend not in word,* Jam. 3. 2. he is fit to be accounted in the number of thoſe that can inoffenſively govern the whole body. The faireſt Garden is ſpoil'd without an Hedge. Had our Grandmother *Eve* but fenced in her Tongue, ſhe had not loſt her Paradiſe, nor bequeath'd the unhappy Legacy of ſin and miſery to her Poſterity. *Job* obtained a victory over the Devil with ſilence: he

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that fill'd his body with Ulcers, could not bliſter his Tongue, nor exaſperate that *unruly member* to charge his Creator fooliſhly. 'Tis the great policy of Satan, to continue our Vaſſallage by the ſame methods by which he firſt procured it, *viz.* a phrenetick Garrulity: we all fell, becauſe *Eve* could not hold her peace; becauſe ſhe would ſay that to her Husband, ſhe had not learn'd of her God. When broad chinks and cranneys are ſeen in the walls of our Houſe, we begin to fear its downfal; and why do we not as well the fatal Prognoſticks of uncloſed Mouths? How many Chriſtian-ſouls have been cruſh'd to death, yea, ſunk down to Hell? How many a credulous Ear hath ſucked offence in? how many Houſes have fallen into diſcord and jars, for want of ſtopping up the gaping chinks and cranneys of a wide Mouth? But that I may be a little more particular, our *Tongues* are apt to *offend*, as in many others, ſo chiefly in theſe things; either in the broaching of *errour*, or the concealment of *truth*, or in the *raſh publication* of it; by vile *Calumny*,

lumny, by corrupt *Counſel*, by *Flattery*, or by *Filthineſs*.

You ſee what a large Field I am got into, and how many ſtones of *offence* lie about it: and though *Solomon* ſays, *He that removeth ſtones* Eccleſ. 10. 9 *ſhall be hurt therewith*; yet I go on to prepare the way of the *Lord* and his *little ones*; beſeeching you all to remember that you are not at a Muſick-lecture, to have your Ears tickled; but at the Chair and Tribunal of Chriſt, to have your offences arraigned, to have your lives bettered. And now as I have been always careful not to give *offence* by making a *Satyr* on any religious Party, the ſame method I ſhall ſtill purſue, as far as it conſiſts with my *duty* towards God, the peace and quiet of his *Church*, and the diſcharge of my own *Conſcience*.

In the rank of *offenſive Tongues*, I will firſt preſent you with the falſe Prophet, the teacher of Lies, which cauſeth many unſtable Souls *to erre from the faith once delivered to the Saints*; the *Prieſts* (ſaith *Malachi*) *are departed out of the way*, and then no wonder that the People *ſtumble* at

at Gods Law: ſome fat gobbet thoſe ſpiritual Guides ſtep aſide for, and care not whom they miſlead for company. When *Phyſicians* deſign to purge a Sucking-child, they command the Nurſe, and not the Child to take the Potion, that with more ſafety in the Nurſes Milk the Child may receive the benefit of the Medicine. The Devil is no leſs skil'd in poiſoning the Babes of Chriſt; for thus the two great Clerks of *Rome*, the voluminous *Cardinals*, and their ſucceeding *Jeſuites*, have infuſed corrupt Articles into our common *Creed*, have taught people to ſhake off obedience to their lawful Soveraign, and to expect Wreaths of Martyrdom for bloudy Aſſaſſinatious. 'Tis true indeed, they call us *Hereticks*, and charge us with *Schiſm* in departing from their Communion; but theſe calumnies will eaſily be blown off, and like bullets ſhot againſt Heaven, fall upon their own heads: for we withdrew not from them, till *they gave the offence* by departing from the *Catholick Faith*. And to prove this, I need no other teſtimony than their *Tridentine* Creed,

Creed, which in those Articles wherein they differ from the Church of *England*, is neither *true*, *ancient*, nor *Catholick*, but an entire Apostacy from it, and without controversie, *is the most Catholick, and greatest Heresie in the Christian-world*. View it first in their Doctrine of *Transubstantiation*; an Opinion that upon due examination and choice, no man can embrace without reproaching his Maker and Redeemer, by renouncing his very Reason and outward Senses: For to make me believe that to be *Flesh* which I see and taste is *Bread*, is to turn fool or madman; and for an *unwarrantable* Faith, forfeit both my Reason and Sense: and by the same reason they would justifie this fond and absurd Notion, a man may as well believe the *Picture* of a man to be the man himself. If the Church of *Rome* would lay aside their *Fire* and *Faggot*, (the strongest argument that ever yet they brought to prove it) and tell us which of Christs Bodies it is that is *corporeally* in the Sacrament, whether his glorifi'd, or not glorifi'd body, and clear it from all those *monstrous absurdi-*

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ties which that opinion is guilty of, they would greatly oblige us; for till they have done this, they must give us leave to believe it a *real* and substantial *contradiction*.

Deu. 27. 15. And notwithstanding Gods solemn prohibition against the *worship of Images* delivered in fire, with Thunder and Lightening, on the Mount; yet in a direct opposition, the Church of *Rome* command under *dreadful Anathema's*, that religious worship be given to them. *Jo. Azor.* tom. 1. lib. 9. c. 6. *Aquinas* says, that Sum. par. 3. q. 25. art. 3. the *same* Worship is to be given to the *Image* of Christ, as to *Christ himself*: And this is avouch'd by *Zac. Bovir* par. 2. reg. 1. p. 189. *Pedro de Cabrera super loc.* to be the Doctrine of their whole Church, and the contrary to be heretical. Thus impudently sacrilegious dare they be, though the Scripture saith, Deut. 27. 15. *Cursed be all they that worship graven Images, and boast themselves of Idols.*

Concil. *Trident.* 22. Sess. c. 8. 9 Canon. Ind. expur. regul. 5. Again, the Church of *Rome* forbids the use of the sacred Oracles to Laicks, and hath therefore placed the *holy Bible* in the front of *prohibited* Books, and *Anathematiz'd* all those that should dare to translate it into any Language vulgarly intelligible:

and

and to ſtrengthen this *ungodly* Decree, the Sons of that Church have ſuperadded many *ſlight* and *undervaluing* expreſſions, tending to leſſen the eſteem of *God's holy Word*. One tells us, that if the Scriptures were not ſtrengthned by the authority of the *Church*, they were of no more value than *Æſops Fables*. Another of their Authors (inriched with the ſame brazen modeſty) ſays, *that the people were permitted to read God's Word, was the invention of the Devil!* Bluſh O Heavens, and be aſtoniſhed O Earth, at ſuch daring impieties! Tell it not in *Gath*, nor in the Streets of *Askelon*, leſt whole Chriſtianity be ſtigmatiz'd for a deluſion, through the wickedneſs of thoſe that bear the world in hand they are the onely Catholick Chriſtians.

Vid. *Chemnit.* exam. de S. Canon, p. 47.

Perſ. de tradit. par. aſſert. 3.

The Doctrine of depoſing Kings, diſpoſing their Kingdoms, and authorizing Subjects to deſtroy their lawful Soveraign, they not onely ſtoutly deny even to death, but accuſe us of ſcandalizing both them and their Religion, in charging the act of one man as a blemiſh on the whole

whole Church. And for the more credit to their charge, they vapour with a Decree of the *Council of Constance*, which (as they say) forbids the murder of Crown'd Heads. 'Tis true, by this Council the Murder of Kings is covertly forbidden, but tacitely implied; for it onely makes the horrid act unlawful, where it wants the Judges Sentence: But if his *Holiness*, or any *General of an Order*, sentence them, it renders the proditorious act not onely Lawful, but Meritorious. And that this was but the opinion of one man, *viz. Mariana*, is a grand mistake; for 'tis a Doctrine taught in their Schools, justified by their Practices, and maintained in their Writings, as might be made appear from *Ribadenira*, *Becanus*, *Windecks*, *Stapleton*, and the rest of that lawless herd of *Ignatian Casuists*: Nay, 'tis a Doctrine whose bloudy hand can never be concealed, nor the stain wash'd off from their Church, whilst the triumphant Oration of Pope *Sixtus* the Fifth continues extant in the world, which he made to his Cardinals in the *Consistory* upon the barbarous Assassination

Concil. Const. Sess. 15.

tion of *Henry* the Third of *France*, after he was ſtab'd to death by *Clement* a Dominican Fryer, aſſimilating it with the myſtery of the Incarnation and Reſurrection, and with the acts of *Judeth* and *Eleazar*. Again,

When *Gerrard* deſign'd the Murther of the *Prince of Orange*, he had encouragement, and bleſſing, from the *Warden* of the Fryers at *Tourny*; and the Jeſuit his Apologiſt, ſays, That *Gerrard* did that deed, *pour la bien de vertu!*

Campian the Jeſuit, having Command from *Rome*, and aſſociated by *William Parry*, conſpired the death of Queen *Elizabeth*.

Gordon, *Chreiton*, and *Abercany*, Jeſuits, plotted the death of *King James*; and this traiterous deſign was forwarded by two Breves from *Clement* the Eighth: and Cardinal *Bellarmin* calls *Garnet*, and his fellow *Oldcorn*, Martyrs, and for ſuch are Regiſter'd in the Jeſuits Catalogue of Martyrs, Printed at *Rome*, 1607. Of theſe ſanguinary Attempts, I could give you inſtances *uſq; ad nauſeam*; but for the preſent let theſe ſuffice.

What hath been ſaid, I hope is ſuffi-

cient to prove, that their bloudy Tenent of *King-killing*, is not the Opinion of one man only, but that some of all Orders in that Church have bin guilty of it; and tho Charity may encline me to believe, that many Loyal persons of the Romish perswasion, do abhor those Jesuitical principles and practices, yet the Pope, nay, the whole Church cannot be acquitted, till they have punished those Church-men of his, who have publickly abetted such treasonable Conspiracies, censured *Mariana*'s, and such other Books as have commended Regicides, to the great scandal of Religion; and by his Pontifical decree, provided better for the safety of Kings, than his Colledge of *Jesuits* have: for till this be done, and they have given us as many years experience of their Loyalty, as they have of their Treachery, 'twill be of dangerous consequence to believe them innocent: For what faith, or trust, can be reposed in those men, whose Church perswades them to be wicked, and covers all their hell-bred Contrivances under the umbrello of Religion, which does nothing else but

give

give ſcandal to it, and bring upon themſelves an endleſs Woe?

Now having done with theſe killing Nurſes, I could gladly break off this unſavoury Theme, but that there is *another Sect* amongſt us, whoſe Poyſonous Doctrines are as baneful if we take not heed: 'Tis one of the preſent Troubles we groan under; a proud company of male-contented Bablers (who are Prieſts of their own making, and the fictitious Idols of abuſed Phancies), having imbibed Seditious principles, from them unwary Zealots have ſuck't not *the Sincere milk of the Word*, I will be bold to ſay, but a poyſoned doſe of Schiſm and Prejudice. Thus the Stars fall from Heaven, the waters below are turn'd into wormwood, and the drinkers dye. What miſchievous offences have overſpread the boſom of great Britain? What ſplenative rage, and opprobrious words, are caſt on the face of Authority? What ſtumbling-blocks are daily thrown out, to check harmonious Peace, and united Devotion, ſince troubleſome, rebellious, and teſty Spirits were both *indulged* and applauded!

'Tis now grown a neceſſary point of Purity, to muzzle Aſſemblies into Schiſm and Faction, to ſnivel out a *demure Lye*, inſtead of a holy Doctrine, to vent a *Libel* inſtead of a Uſe, to bring in ſuſpition that *Thames* and *Tyber* have joyn'd Channels, and that our Government, Rites, and Liturgy, are wholly Romiſh, or Antichriſtian. With this *ſoure milk* the Babes of Chriſt are publickly fed, and yet the *Non-conforming Presbyters* would be thought no Offenders.

The boyſterous Thunders of Heaven ſtrike not the top of *Olympus*; but ſaucy Seducers are now found, that fear not to blaſt the height of Majeſty, overthrow the Seats of Superiority, and tear Allegeance out of the peoples hearts; and inſtead of caſting St. *Peters* Net into the wild luſts of *Mars*, tranſlate the bleſſed *Goſpel of Peace* into the iron language *of Blood and War, Trouble* and *Diſcord*. Truly however ſuch *clamorous Zealots* boaſt of the certainty of their *Election*, Chriſt hath mark'd them with a *woe* of rejection. *Woe to thoſe barbarous Pilats that mingle blood with their Sacrifices; Woe to thoſe furious Sampſons that muſt have*

have multitudes to periſh with them; Woe to the *Seducing Prophet*, by whom the offence comes.

But *truth* as well as errour may occaſion an offence; good Counſel, like the Peach-tree, may bring forth poyſonous fruit in one place, and wholſome in another. The meſſages of Heaven are oft compared to ſhowers of rain, which falling in due ſeaſon makes a plentiful year; but ſcarcity follows unſeaſonable ſhowers: That which in one place avails, in another annoys; it inricheth our fields, but dirtieth our ſtreets. *Woe be to thoſe Clouds* (ſaith *Bernard*) *that ſend ſuch ſhowers, as make foul work among us*, but bring forth no Fruit.

A word ſpoken in due ſeaſon, and fit place, hath an excellent ſavour; but when both theſe are wanting, the audience goes away worſe. Among others, there are three waies of giving offences, even in the publication of Truth.

1. Either by ſcrupulous Doctrine,
2. By bitter Rebukes, or
3. By perſonal Invectives.

Firſt, We have ſome that while they would be thought *Solid*, do in-

deed prove but *saucy* Divines; on all occasions they are rushing into the hidden Secrets of God, and perplex their weak people with the thorny mysteries of *Election* and *reprobation*; a doctrine which is fitly ranked among those things that profit being unknown: Not that I deny, but there may be excellent matter drawn from such high Points; but the Brain must use her knowledge, as she doth her spittle, and vent no more of it, than may stand with the bodies welfare. The bright countenance of *Moses* was vayled, when he was to deal with the people, whose benefit he prefer'd before his own applause. It were far better men obscured the light of their knowledge and learning, than that they should display it to *affright* others, or *dote about questions that breed envy and evil surmises.* There are in our Religion several Mysteries, and holy Scripture contains many things above the reach of our quickest Capacities; and in nothing more men give offences, than in going about to *explain Mysteries*, and give an account of such things, which themselves acknowledge to be *incomprehensible.*

henſible. And this is not my opinion only, but (what ſome men will think ſtrange) 'tis Mr. *Calvin's* alſo: for at the cloſe of his Doctrine of decrees, he adviſes Miniſters to be very wary of propoſing this Doctrine to the people, for fear of *giving them offence and diſturbance:* For if a man (ſaith he) ſhould come into a Congregation, and thus beſpeak them: *Friends and Chriſtians, I am here ſent to you to* preach the Goſpel; *but I muſt acquaint you aforehand, that there are but two or three among you, thoſe* (that are the Elect) *that are like to be ever the better for my Miniſtry: and as to the reſt of you, there's* Horribile Decretum, *a dreadful Bar in your way,* that all the Preaching in the world can do you no good; *and the Ordinances of Chriſt,* apply to them as you will, *can never prove available to your Salvation:* His hearers would run out of the Church, and cry *the man were out of his Wits.* This juſt reſentment was extorted from the *Geneva-Oracle,* by an ingenious reflection on his own Scheme, and the unhappy conſequence he *foreſaw* it would produce; and I heartily wiſh his caveat

might be obſerved by his followers. For certainly it would conduce more to the Glory of God, and the Intereſt of Chriſtianity, if men would let thoſe things that are myſterious remain ſo, and employ themſelves in promoting Juſtice, Honeſty, and ſerious Devotion; and inſtead of *reprobating* one another into the *Regions of darkneſs*, to do offices of love and friendſhip one towards another, and *adorn* the Doctrine of our Saviour by our mutual good-will, and ſerviceableneſs to our brethren.

Secondly, Publick Rebukes, (unleſs like *Jonathans* Rod they be dipped in honey) offend all. The rough hands of *Eſau* were unfit for Superiority. Sinners like blind men muſt be led gently, not haled by violence. What gets the Merchant by a Tempeſt? Who had not rather drink at a ſweet Fountain, than a briniſh Sea? who raiſes a fallen man, that bows not himſelf down? ſleepers ought to be waked gently: for as frightful and violent rouſings have driven many into wild Lunacies; ſo wounded and broken hearts are caſt into deſpair, prophane ones into fury and virulence,

lence, by *the offensive harshness of a bitter reprover.* St. *Chrysostom* observes, Ψύχῃ γὰρ ἐπειδὰν ἀπερυθριάσαι βιασθεὶς ἀναλγησίαν ἐκπιπτῃ, That *too unreasonable, or importunate reproof, is apt to make the Sinner first shameless, and then obdurate.*

In the List of the Beatitudes, we are to be first Meek, and then Merciful: we must be *merciful* to the Soul of our brother; but we must have the *Spirit of meekness* in our selves first. To correct other mens offences in *anger*, is to be guilty of greater than theirs. How have those grim Orators forgot this, that vomit nothing but *fire* and *brimstone!* that breath nothing but *judgment* and *condemnation*! that thus unadvisedly skare distressed souls from the door of *Christs mercy*! The Jews have a saying, It were better we were cold in our graves, than we should make our brother pale in a publick assembly: Our reproofs are allowed to glow with the ardent desires of our Neighbours *reformation*; but if we suffer them to grow so hot as to blister the skin of his *Reputation*, it is *reproaching*, not *reproving*. God Almighty, I am sure,

ſure, hath a quarrel to thoſe rigorous
Ezc. 34.4. maſters, *that have not ſtrengthened the diſeaſed, not healed the ſick, nor bound up that which was broken*; but inſtead of a *pious condeſcention* to their Infirmities, have by bitter taunts *encouraged* them to preſume, or *frighted* them to *deſperation*.

Thirdly, Perſonal invectives offend all: our bleſſed Lord brought not his Traitor upon the ſtage in publick view, but deciphers him in general terms, *One of you ſhall betray me*. St. *Paul* would have his *Timothy to rebuke and intreat all*; but gives him no commiſſion by a particular reflection to *ſcandalize* any. We are Fiſhermen, and muſt caſt in a common bait, without deſign to wound any ſingle perſon in the common eſteem; leſt inſtead of *reforming his vices*, we give him a *real offence*, and make the ſore rankle worſe for being vanned with the publick Air. How ill-becoming is it then in our low-ſpirited *predicants*, that chooſe a Text on purpoſe to begin a braul! and *Raiſe* a Doctrine to revenge ſome *Peccadillo* on their ſilent Auditors! This is *to Preach our ſelves, and not Chriſt*,

Christ, and him crucified; to bring into contempt Gods sacred Ordinance, and to make the more serious part of our discourses to be slighted, for blending our little *quarrels* with the *holy message*, and driving on some design of our own, under the mask of a more holy Employment. One would think the foolishness of this Vice might obstruct a further progress: For it neither procures us Friends, nor removes our Feuds; but on the contrary, enrages our enemies, and makes them assume an unjust defence, rather than fall under a just shame. In whatsoever Sphere we move, 'tis good neither to bite nor fawn, but rather subscribe to him that said,

Nolo minor me timeat, despiciatur major.

An even and humble carriage to all men, especially whilst dispensing the sacred Word, makes men look like *Embassadors of Christ*, and such whose Religion is not vain, spending it self in idle & frivolous taunts, but is circumscribed within the bounds of Charity, that will neither hear nor speak any thing that may directly occasion an *Offence*. Our

Our bleſſed Saviour reſtraining the *hoſtility* and *murther* of the *Tongue*, threatens *hell-fire* to them that call their brother *fool*. Meaning, that all language which does really, and by intention, diſgrace him in the greater inſtances, is as directly againſt the Charity of the Goſpel, as killing a man was againſt the Juſtice and Severity of the Law: And although the Word it ſelf way be uſed to reprove the indiſcretions and careleſs follies of an idle perſon; yet it muſt be uſed onely *in order to his amendment*, by an *authorized* perſon, and within the limits of a juſt reproof, upon juſt occaſion, and ſo as may not do him miſchief in the event of things. And though ſome men juſtifie their perſonal rebukes, from examples in Scripture, as from our Saviour calling his Diſciples ἀνόητους fooliſh, and St. *James* uſing ὦ ἄνθρωπε κενὲ *vain man*, the ſame in ſignification with the forbidden Raca; and St. *Paul* calling the *Galatians mad, fooliſh* and *bewitched*; and Chriſt calling *Herod Fox*, &c. Yet is their practice not warranted hereby, unleſs it be done in the *ſame manner*, and with the *ſame mind*: if it be for correction and reproof

proof toward perſons deſerving it, and by perſons whoſe *authority* can warrant it, and this be done prudently, ſafely, and uſefully, it is not contumely; but when men upon all occaſions revile an offending perſon, leſſenning, ſowring his ſpirit and his life, deſpiſing his infirmities, tragically expreſſing his lighteſt Miſdemeanour, being tyrannically declamatory and intolerably angry for a trifle: Theſe are ſuch who, as *Apollonius* the Philoſopher ſaid, will not ſuffer the offending perſon to know when his fault is *great*, and when 'tis *little*: For they who always put on a Supreme anger, or expreſs the leaſt anger with the higheſt reproaches, make no difference between him that robs a Houſe, and him that breaks a Glaſs. *Non plus æquo, non diutius æquo*, was a good rule for reprehenſion of ſinners. He that reproves too *long*, does reproach and *harden* the Offendor; he that does it too *bitterly*, betraies his own *anger*, and is guilty of *rayling*; if too *loud*, he is *immodeſt*; if too *publick*, he is *unmanly*; and if too *perſonal*, he is *imprudent*, for no clamorous perſon can be wiſe. The cure of which evil con-

consists in following St. *Pauls* Exhortation, *Let all bitterness and clamour be put away.* Spare the *person*, but not the *sin*; for he carries a witness in his bosom, that tells him he is the *man* against which the arrow of reproof is shot; whereas the opposite dealing will rather *shame* the sinner, than *amend* him. *Væ increpanti*, Woe to the bitter reprover by whom the offence comes.

Fourthly, Yea, and *non increpanti* too; our very silence may give an offence: But one Erring man is winked at, saith *Origen*, and the whole Church is wounded. What mercy is this, to dispence with one, and to destroy all! How oft is all *Israel* punisht for the fault of one *Achan*! Concealed enormities imply a permission that encourageth to perpetration; and now that which might have been blown away with a word is grown a rooted example. Such Prophets had Jury in *Isaiahs* time *that smooth'd up the people in lyes.* Prophets that should have been

Isai. 9. 15. *Heads*, and indeed were nothing but
Ezek. 13. 4. *Tayls*; nothing but tails to cover filthiness: Or as *Ezekiel* amplifies

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that homely Caracter, They were grown *Foxes with great tails*, as fit as could be to hide or wipe away the noysomnes of a sinning people, as Foxes with their dangling singles do their filth, that they may not be sented by their loud threatning enemies. O Mercenary wretch, saith St. *Augustin*, thou saweſt a Wolf endangering the Flock of Christ, and ranneſt away! How ran I away? will some old *Levite* reply, that sticks faithfully to his Glebe and vails; why, here I live, here am I Canonically resident; how do I run away? That Father will tell you, you are then fled, when your lips are *sinfully closed*; when either to keep a *commodious friend*, or to shun a *furious enemy*, some leud man shall be let alone in his impieties. How many *luxurious wantons* might have been chast and *regular*? How many in whom the sparkling Canary hath drowned *Reason* and *Grace*, might have start up rigid Paterns of *Temperance* and *Sobriety*! How many gripple *Mammonists* might have become renown'd Miracles of Bounty, if some holy and wholsome tongue had given a timely assault,

beſt company; and any reluctant diſlike of Sin, ſpoils and diſturbs it: And ſo *Chriſt* himſelf muſt now be excluded, as an unfit Companion for *Publicans and Sinners.* All concern for his Honour muſt out of *civility* be diſclaimed, even by his own followers, becauſe *to the Jew he is a ſtumbling block, and to the Greek Philoſopher fooliſhneſs.* As the tranſcendent Graces and Gifts of Gods holy Spirit are almoſt levelled with moral Virtues, ſo thoſe *Goſpel-duties,* ſuch as the fear of death could never yet diſpence with, muſt now be reſtrained and limited, by the rules of a pretendedly civil, *i. e.* a licentious Converſation. Nay, ſo far has this endearing and obliging humor prevail'd, that men are afraid to ſtand up in the Cauſe of God, leſt they ſhould affront his *Enemies*; but muſt live in conſtant *rebellion* to their own *Conſciences,* on the petty obligation of *Civility* and Manners falſly ſo called: Whereas according to the rule of *good Manners,* that is certainly the higheſt rudeneſs, to dare to appear *irreligiouſly* in the ſight of them that have by a ſolemn and ſacred Vow

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engaged themſelves in a contrary Profeſſion. For as in civil matters, to *conceal Treaſon* includes an equal guilt, and is obnoxious to the ſame puniſhment with the *actual offence*: So in this caſe alſo, he that does not *reprehend* a ſinner, is little leſs than a cringing *aſſiſtant* to anothers debauchery. For ſhame therefore, my brethren, let it not be ſaid of you, that you love the Society of wicked Wretches, better than the bleſſed Fellowſhip of Angels; and that you had rather hear your *God* and *Saviour* abuſed, than diſturb your helliſh company: and will hazard the damnation of your ſouls, out of *Courtſhip to the Devil*, rather than be counted abſurd among *unreaſonable men*. It was this filled the ſoul of *Iſaiah* with amazement and horrour, if the Fathers conſtrue him right: *Woe unto me*, ſaith that generous Seer, *becauſe I am a man of uncleau lips*: He cannot praiſe God with the ſinging Seraphim, ſaith *Jerom*, becauſe his lips are unclean, and their foulneſs aroſe from hence, that they had not faithfully *reproved* wicked *Uzziah*. All *Ely*'s perſonal holineſs is eclipſed with the Iſai. 6. 5.

assault, and come in to the rescue of the precious Image of God, so miserably defac'd by an unchristian connivance? But on the contrary, that which is our shame, and should be our sorrow, we suffer Gods Name to be dishonoured and blasphemed, Christs body to be torn and mangled afresh with Oaths, and his truth impaired with impious Absurdities, yet never open our mouths in their vindication! What prepostrous madness is this! should our friends Coat but sit disorderly on his back, we would presently rectifie the immodish errour: But his life is wretchedly *debauch'd* and *dissolute*, and we never stop him in this dangerous Carreer. Is not the Soul of more worth than the Rayment? this at most but an unfashionable blemish, but the other fearful and extreamly perilous. Might not the Jew suffer *the beast of his Neighbour to fall and perish*; and shall we suffer the Soul of our brother to be undone to all eternity? *God forbid*; let us rather by good advice, snatch them as *brands out of the fire*. And this is a duty not confin'd to those of the Ministerial Function onely, who must needs

needs want the frequent and requisite opportunities, but indispensibly incumbent upon all men who *fear God*, and wish the good of humane Souls.

Easie observation will make it apparent, that the neglect of this Duty hath caused the greatest *degeneracy* in Christianity, and made Religion esteemed the most inconsiderable part and end of our lives: That general remisness visibly in Piety, is chiefly, if not wholly, to be attributed to this sort of slavish Compliance; which even Conscientious men are too apt to admit of, in relation to other mens vices; by which they receive a currant stamp and approbation, whilest a prudent reproof would certainly work a Shame, if not a Conviction in the sinner. Now this unfriendly and unchristian Custom, is usually warranted upon the *pretended Civility* of the Age, and *Freedom of conversation*, which allows every man an uncontroulable priviledge of *living his own life*: And then it must be no less than *rudeness* and *impertinence*, to introduce any religious Cautions. Indifferency here makes the

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guilt of those hainous Transgressions he winked at.

Hos. 4. 8. The Prophet *Hosea* exhibits a complaint against a sort of Priests, *Cannibals rather*, that *eat up the sins of the people:* for as the Viands we eat, after a short digestion become our own flesh and blood; so the *Sins* of the people which we *smother* and *palliate*, being thus swallowed, become our *own*. The sacred Ministers of Justice, in what Orb soever they shine, will easily apprehend how much this Lesson concerns them, especially in this dismal Juncture of publick affairs; and permit me (not as an imperious Dictator, but) as an humble Suppliant, to intreat you to remember that the *sins* of *others*, which you labour not within your powers to *prevent*, are *yours* in the guilt, as well as those of your own *personal* commission: and the exercise of Lenity in grand Enormities brings a *woe* upon your own heads. *For to justifie the Wicked, and condemn the Righteous, are both alike to God.* Have a care therefore, you earthly gods, that you give no *Indulgence* or *Countenance* to that *generation of Vipers*, that would be poysoning the

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Cups of *sacred Monarchs*, and thrusting their stings into the innocent hearts of *merciful Princes*, or sucking the Royal blood of their *lawful Soveraigns*. And as you have any love or regard for that Religion *which is pure and peaceable, truly Antient, Catholick and Apostolick*; or any abhorrency to that inchanting City fully of Idolatry, Superstition and Blasphemy; any concern for the safety of his *Majesties Person*, Crown and Dignity; and your own *Freedom* and *Property*, that you would *vex those Midianites that trouble you with their wiles*; and correct those *Amalekites* which conspire the ruine of our *Israel*, and endeavour once more to make *England*, *Issachar* like, *couch under the burden of a Romish or Phanatick Vassalage*. 'Tis as manifest as the Sun on the Meridian, that the mischief intended is acted with *two hands*, (as the Prophet most emphatically) *the best of which is a Brier, and the most righteous of them sharper than a Thorn-hedge*; which gives us cause to implore the assistance of both arms against them, the strength of the *Brachium Seculare*, to be added to our weaker *Ecclesiastical* coertions,

Mic. 3. 4.

to manacle those mighty men in *outragious Wickedness*, who every where confront not us, but God, in *open* Rebellion or *private* Treachery, in a *Conclave* or a *Conventicle*. Doth the Sun in his imagined Progress meet with Constellations full of venome and irregularity? their hurtful malice is corrected by his beneficial Raies: Doth he meet with benign and temperate Planets? they have strength and influence added to them by that Superiour Light. What do we look for from the *Superiour Powers*, but the approbation & encouragement of the virtuous Stars, and the *Cure* and *Correction* of the Malignant? And here I cannot but complain of those *Stumbling-blocks* that stop the course of Justice; Our Constables Assize and Session *blanks*, and our Church-wardens Visitation *bilks*: Oh abominable partiality! they that are alwaies *inveighing* against the *Times*, to indulge the petulancy of a *mistaken Zeal*; and come forth *all the year* with eager Complaints against those that sit at the *Helm*; they that are *daily* bellowing out their *Discontents*, and *arraigning* their Governours failings;

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they that find all things amiſs in the management of *publick affairs*; when themſelves are *inſpected* (and it lies in their *power* and *office*, by virtue of the *ſolemn Oath of God*, to redreſs theſe grievances, by preſenting the Offenders to the cognizance of their Superiours) like ſurly *Elephants* endure no repreſentment of their uglineſs, not the leaſt aſperſion of a diſorder. Abroad in the *Church* or *State*, they will tell you nothing is *right*; but on their own *dunghills*, in their own *Pariſhes*, or *Conſtableries*, *omnia bene*, all is as it ſhould be. Thus theſe poor *Officers* plunge themſelves into *Perjury*, for fear of ſome *frowning Sir*; and *diſoblige their Conſciences*, *becauſe they will not diſpleaſe their Neighbours*; and by concealing *paſt offences*, bring them into a *cuſtome*, which no vigilance can remove. *Væ ſilenti*, woe to the *ſilent Tongue* by whom the offence comes.

Fifthly, And now *Calumny* follows with her mouth full of Poyſon, ready to blaſt and *offend* all. *As Timothies* Pipe enkindled the rage of the fighting *Macedonians*, ſo ſpleen and hatred are ſtirred up, with the raying ac-

cents of a malevolent Tongue. The ſpies of *Canaan*, as an honeſt Rabbin obſerves, did but diſcredit the trees and the ground, and the ſtone-walls, and a thouſand miſchiefs enſued; how many evills may we then think do they bring on *themſelves* and *others*, who ſharpen their tongues to *wound* and *diſgrace* men! When our Saviour ask'd his Diſciples *what men were wont to ſay of him*, had they been addicted to the vice of *raiſing quarrels*, they might a reply'd, One calls you *a Demoniac*, another a *Samaritan*, another a *Wine-bibber*; theſe are the goodly Characters you get from a thankleſs people: But theſe harſh and approbrious titles are kept from his ear; they tell him nothing but their good words; One calls you *John Baptiſt*, another *Jeremy*, another ſome *great Prophet*. The lips of Chriſts Spouſe are like a thread of Scarlet; yea, indeed, like that Scarlet thread which *Rahab* tyed to her window, not to ſtrangle any, but ſave all. The lips of a true Chriſtian are tyed with ſuch threads as prevent miſchief, but breed none. It would be well done of our ſhrill Dames, and imperious Women,

Women, to think a little on *Rahab*, and keep their houſes unhurt with the Scarlet thread of *ſilence* and *modeſty*. We ſhould not then have our ears fill'd, and our hearts wounded with *domeſtical brauls*; we ſhould not have *groundleſs* and *rancorous tales* ſo currant among us; we ſhould not have every *ſmall ſpark* made a mountain of *Ætna*, if this Scarlet thread of *Silent and Modeſty Charity* were but religiouſly faſtned to *the door of our lips*. But *Grave* and *Good* men, for ought I ſee, are as ready to over-laſh, as that *weak Sex*; and let me tell them, ſuch offences are worſt. A ball of wool or leather hurts not where it lights; but a bullet ſpit with violence from the mouth of a Canon, cauſes Towers and Bulwarks to moulder into duſt: So men of *gravity* being once heard to bolt out *raſh* and *unjuſt Verdicts*, the *weak* Chriſtians that cannot *judge* muſt needs *ſtumble*. How hath the *canker'd* mouths of ſome demure *Levites*, who had firſt got a reputation of ſingular Sanctity, blaſted the face and form of our renowned Church, inflam'd peoples hearts with a rude and ſpightful Opi-

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nion of the *Reverend Prelates* ſet over them! How have theſe *great Wheels* ſet the leſſer a going, that now too many Families are become houſes of Inquiſition, when every *Notch'd Ideot* will as freely as falſly talk of thoſe men, in whoſe *aweful preſence* 'twould be ſawcineſs for them to ſpeak at all without *permiſſion*. The *Bible* theſe holy Railers ſeem to hug, hath told them, if a Ruler be reproach'd, *a bird of the air* (which *Hugo* the Cardinal thinks is an evil ſpirit) *ſhall accuſe them of it*; and that if they inure their Tongues *to ſpeak evil of Dignities, and deſpiſe Dominions*, they are *filthy dreamers*, not true Diſciples. Our Lord hath put caſes of an *offending eye, and hand, and foot*, but we hear nothing of an offending head; That, ſays *Cajetan, challengeth more regard, than to be prophan'd by any vulgar breath, or to be cenſured by any thing under Heaven.* How much then they are to be reproved, that in their *Conventicles* ſet their lungs to *ſale* to encourage Sedition, and *promote a new Rebellion by juſtifying the laſt*; I leave it to God and their own Conſciences to judge: but

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it makes me very ſuſpitious they are of the ſame ſpirit with *Diotrephes*; (for there is a ſtrange temptation in being a Head, or Ruler, though but of a Faction) and that their conſtant belching ſuch malicious words, diſloyal glances, and uncharitable reflections againſt their lawful Superiours, proceeds from that ambitious love they have to Preheminence; which ſtains their Zeal with ſuch an averſion to thoſe Humilities and due Submiſſion they owe to others.

Methinks 'tis miſchief enough in the *buſie tales of Detraction*, that ill opinions are bred by it, Unkindneſs foſter'd, Charity quenched, and Jarrs raiſed that many times end in Blood, that we need not add to it the diſpleaſure of an enraged Deity. *Solomon* tells us, *There are ſix things the Lord hates, and the ſeventh he counts a foul abomination.* Pride and Bloodineſs, and wicked Imaginations, were hateful enough; but there is yet a worſe, a more abominable thing, *a ſcandalous Babler*, a ſower of Diſcord among brethren: this ſhall be laid in our diſh in that terrible Judgment, that we ſat like grim Judges, and ſpake harſhly

harſhly againſt our brother, *and ſlandered our mothers ſon.* This is a fruitful, though a fooliſh Vice. For through the help of the Devil, and our corrupt Nature, whenſoever we have a mind to throw dirt at one another, there is enough to be found in every ſtreet. The Apoſtle tells us, *In ſome things we offend all.* Which renders it the greaſt imprudence imaginable, for him that hath a houſe made of glaſs, to throw ſtones at his neighbours windows, when the ſlighteſt requital will quickly demoliſh the brittle Fabrick of his own Reputation.

Alterius dictum aut factum ne carpſeris unquam
Exemplo ſimili ne te derideat alter.

And however we ſet a *grave* look upon it, as if we had done nothing amiſs; however our own *Oracles* pleaſe us; however we riſe up from our garrulous Bench, forgetting the miſchief is done both to the *audience* and *accuſed*; Yet the ſevere Judge of Heaven and Earth will call us to a ſtrict account, and make us at laſt ſee the foulneſs of that Vice we accounted none,

none ; and then *væ detrahenti, Wo be to that man by whoſe detracting tongue the offence comes.*

Sixthly, Pernicious counſels are *Offences* of the Tongue alſo, and as groſs and ſpreading as any. Sin is then grown to a fearful height, when it delights to ſpread its infection; when the leud man takes up his ſeat in *the Chair of Peſtilence*; when like a Doctor of the Chair, thoſe evils that he practiſeth himſelf, he ſeeks to teach others. The Spirit of God finds fault with the *Church of Pregamus*, that ſhe had a ſort of men that held the *Doctrine of Balaam*; upon the naming of which, ſome will think, ſaith *Origen*, there were ſome in St. *Judes* time that ſtudied the Black Art, ſome profound Wizzards that pretended the hidden skill of that old Serpent. No, that man teacheth the Doctrine of *Balaam*, that follows his example in perſwading unwary ſouls to the commiſſion of ſcandalous Actions. It was *Balaams* bad counſel, that laid the fair women of *Moab* as *ſtumbling-blocks* before the People of God. Seducing perſwaſions, which either *ſtumble* us in the waies of *Goodneſs*, or lead

lead us into a *vitious courſe*, (and ſo pull the wrath of God on our heads) theſe are the Doctrines of *Balaam*. Thus the Serpent ſeduced *Eve*, and ſhe *Adam*: Thus *Solomons* wives turn his heart from God, and crafty *Achitophel* puts Inceſt into *Abſolons* head: Thus a *litigious* wretch that hath undone himſelf in Suits of *Law*, lies like a gloing coal ready to *kindle* others; for *none proves a deeper knave, than a ſpent fool.* Thus the corrupted Advocate puts *Lies* and *Perjury* into his *Clyents* mouth, for the maintenance of an *unjuſt* Cauſe. Thus furious *Revengers* bring in Seconds, to embrue their hands in blood: Thus Country-*Tiplers* are grown *Raſhers* and *Anchovy*'s to one another: Thus one *Sacrilegious* Cormorant, the Bellweather of the Pariſh, encourages another, and he a third, to a *concealment* of the *Churches due!* How fearful and lamentable is it to conceive what a deal of this *ſcandalous Ware* is openly vended in City and Country! How the gripple *Shopman* nurtures his Apprentice in a Trade of *Lyes:* how the ravenous *Cheater* draws on his landed *Novice* to *Dice*

and

and *Drabs*: How one cries out with *Solomons* Ruffler, *Come, let us take our fill of love till the day break*: another, *Come, let us lay wait for blood*: another, *Let us lurk privately to undo the Innocent*; *let us joyn purses, and find out the strong drink, and continue till night at the wine-boles.*

How would the King take it, should *War* and *Tumult* arise, to have his own *Guard* enticed from *him*, to serve on the Enemies *side!* we are by Baptism become of the *houshold* and retinue of God, and shall we make it our studie to pluck his *Servants* away from him, to corrupt his *houshold* with traiterous counsels, and perswade them to serve on his *Enemies* side, and not look for a furious revenge, not so much as a rebuke from our Ministers mouth? Truly 'twould be well-pleasing to us, that we might alwaies come to you as the gracious *Heralds of Peace*: But Christ Jesus hath given us an example, to *thunder* in such a Case as this, to ring it *aloud* in the terrible *Ruffians* ear, *Væ male consulenti, Wo be to the man by whose pernicious counsel the offence comes.*

Seventhly,

Seventhly, How have I forgot that *tempting* Syren, whoſe enchanting Songs lulls *incautious* Marriners into a ſound ſleep, while their Veſſel ſplits upon a Rock! That crafty *Panther*, whoſe odoriferous breath enticeth herds of Cattel after him to their own deſtruction; I mean the *ſmooth and flattering Tongue, by which the Offence comes.* As the Shell-fiſh is mounted aloft in the Eagles Pounces, to be ſhattered with the greater fall: So frail men are highly extol'd by their *pick-thanks*, but 'tis to tumble them down into a depth of Sin. The precious balms of ungodly men have a ſecret doſe of Poyſon in the compoſition; that *Oleum peccati* & *Oleum veneni*, are uſed promiſcuouſly in the Hebrew Dialect. Now as dogs purſue their game beſt, when the huntſman excites them to ſport and courage with his voice: ſo wicked men run more *eagerly* into vitious courſes, when they are *encouraged* to it by their *obſequious Flatterers.* 'Tis now nick-nam'd a poynt of *good Manners*, a token of *Humility* and *Gentleneſs*, to ſooth and applaud men in Vice and Vanity: and he that baſely

ſtoops

ſtoops not to thoſe *inhumane appliances*, ſhall be reported Proud, Peeviſh, and Envious. But know your *friends*, know your *enemies* better, whoſoever you are that love to be *tickled* with the gloſing tongues of *paraſitical* obſervers. To ſteal our Houſhold-proviſion were a groſs theft; but to be rob'd of our Seed-corn, was a worſe damage. What are our inward affections, but *ſeminaries* of all the goodneſs can be derived from us? Now theſe affections are *ſtol'n* and *ſpoyl'd*, when *oily* tongues, to *endear themſelves*, & patch up the *rents* in *tatter'd* fortunes, ſhall ſo egregiouſly *abuſe* us, as to think well of our own *enormities*, and purſue what we ſhould moſt abhor. What can miſchief us more, than the *pilfering of our hearts*, and *depraving our inclinations*? for by this means the very Seeds of Grace are rifled away, and we are left barren (like the Fig-tree) to the curſe of an incenſed Judge. *Woe be to them that call good evil, and evil good; that put light for darkneſs, and darkneſs for light.* Væ Adulanti, *woe to the flattering Tongue by which the offence comes.*

Eighthly, And may we not rank those in the List of *Vocal Offenders*, from whose *unsavoury Jests*, *lascivious Songs*, and *scurrilous Pens*, balls of Wild-fire are cast abroad to inflame others; whose Bills, like tame Ducks, are ever dabling in stinking mud? How is our *tuneful Melody* scandaliz'd with *debauch'd Airs*; the harmless recreative Instruments of Musick, transform'd into the Engines of Mischief, our *entertainments* fly-blown with and loose and abusive Catches! I hope none will be so uncharitable to think I conclude all under *Offences* that *musically* recreate *themselves*, and delight *others*; no, for *Gods people* may be *merry* within the limits of *filial duty*: 'tis the *abuse* onely that I declaim against, who am of *Aristippus*'s mind:

In libri Patris Sacris,
Mens quæ pudica est nesciet corrumpier.

But these empty sounds vanish into Air, and reach but to few; we have found a way, with the publication of *obscene Pamphlets*, to make our *offences* Eternal, and are become universal Bauds to the whole world. *Cupid* is Crown'd

Crown'd a *Laureat*, and that unchaſt *licenſe* which hath been expung'd and *hiſs'd* at in *Heathen Poets*, is hug'd and applauded in Chriſtian. The Jews have a ſaying, that when Scurrility is heard without, the door rots; the door! nay, the Audience rather; for *rotten communication is the quickeſt corrupter of good Manners.*

Can we think Almighty God beſtow'd our *breath* on us to no other purpoſe, but to blaſt his Image? Can we think our Creator intended us for nothing elſe, but to be the Devils bellows? Oh woful *merriment*, that *afflicts* our God, and *grieves* his Spirit and holy Angels, to make *ſport* for the *Devil* and his *infernal Crew*! Let *no evil commnication*, ſaith the holy Apoſtle, *proceed from you mouth*; and preſently adds, *Grieve not the Spirit of God.* Go now, unhappy *drols*, and think to delight your *fond* admirers with an *obſcene Jeſt*: but remember, that truly Religious hearts are griev'd; nay, the Spirit of God is *griev'd* with thoſe that thus *hazzard their ſouls*, to purchaſe the reputation of *Facetious Blateroons.* Hath Chriſt pronounc'd *weeping* and *woe* to them that *laugh*

now: How then can they think to escape, that do not only *admit*, but *cause* and *further* this vain and frolick excess. Oh lamentable and heedless *folly!* to kindle a *wanton* delight in some *loose heart*, to feed a *lascivious ear*, and make our company *merry*, we bring on our souls a *sorrowful woe*. *Væ turpiloqui*, *woe to the scurrilous Tongue by whom the offence comes.*

Ninthly, Derision and Mockage is the last *offence* I shall arraign in the Tongue: For, *O fooliſh* Galatians, *who hath bewitched you!* saith the chosen Vessel. As the grumbled Charm of a Witch, some think will strike dead a little child, so the goodness of a weak Christian, with every breath of derision is almost blasted. How little a thing staies a boat on the river, and startles a horse by the way-side! no less easily are we deter'd in a course of Goodness. Some frail *disordered* man hath the symptomes of a growing *Cure* upon his Soul, has mew'd off his sick feathers, and now begins to *startle* at his former *excess*; to forbear his *brain-shaking Cups*, and *hell-invented Oaths*; has ty'd up his Tongue to the *good behaviour*, and impos'd on his Con-

Converſation the ſtrict Rules of Religion: and now the *fleering* drunkards make Songs upon him; the *ſcorns* and *taunts* of his old *Mates* lie in his way, and he *falls* again upon the ſame *rock of offence*. Another is *mildly diſpos'd*, and would wink at a wrong, but *hot-ſpurs* are hiſſing his *puſillanimity*; he ſhall be mark't out for a *Coward* and *Milk-ſop*, that dares not incur the guilt of a ſpontaneous *Murder*, to gratifie ſome beaſtly humour. Should a ſort of poor *Chriſtians* be redeem'd from the *Turkiſh Gallyes*, what would we think of him that ſhould endeavour to *betray* them again to their old *ſervitudes*? Is a ſoul *looſed* from the power of *Sin* and *Satan*, what a *horrid villany* is it to enſnare it again into that *Captivity*! Whoſoever he be, that thus nips the *buddings* of Grace, like the cruel *Egyptians*, he does but ſtrangle the Hebrew Babes that God would have preſerved; and like Tyrannous *Herod*, put Chriſt to death, when he is firſt *conceived* and born in a regenerate heart. But the moſt *degenerate* ſort of *ſcoffers*, and *dregs* of mankind, are thoſe that *ſcoff at Religion*, and de-

ride our hopes of *another Life*, as the Phantaſms of a melancholy *Prieſt*, or the Politick ſtratagems of ſome cunning Stateſmen, to keep people in awe. We are caſt into the very *Dog-daies* of Atheiſm and Ungodlineſs, and live among thoſe which ſcoff at ſuch things that are moſt *Sacred* and to be *trembled* at. Oh the frequent *darings* of *Divine* Vengeance, that continually pierces our *ears*, and wounds our *hearts!* and thoſe vented in ſuch *direful expreſſions, that the moſt deeply damned in hell could never be guilty of worſer*. Wonder not if this be the *Cordolium* of all that are religiouſly ſenſible in the land, if it puts them into the weeping Prophets *Iliaca paſſio, My bowels, my bowels, I am pain'd at the very heart*; for 'tis enough to raiſe a *paroxyſm* of grief and indignation in the holy Apoſtle, and make the *hearts* of good men *ſink* and *dye* in them, to ſee how *prodigiouſly* leud and impudent men are grown. Yea, thoſe *dull ſouls* who are inſipid and dreggy on all other arguments, are by the *Devils*, and the *Leviathans* help, grown eloquent in *abuſing God* and *Religion*, to magnifie their abus'd

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Corpuſcularean Philoſophy.

Tell them of a *God*, and they laugh aloud at your folly, who are ſo *tame* and *childiſh* to believe what you *never ſaw*; and pitty your *ignorance*, for being deluded by the *men in black*, into the *melancholy* thoughts of *Religion*. *Democritus* and *Epicurus* are polite Authors, and in better credit with ſuch, than *Moſes*, St. *John*, or St. *Paul*; and *Hobs*'s borrowed Hypotheſis, than the ſacred Volumes of the Old and New Teſtament.

Quis fando temperet à lachrimis?

They can ſolve the *Phænomena* of *Nature*, without the allowance of a *Deity*; and derive the *worlds* Original from a *Fortuitous concourſe of Atomes*. Thus theſe imperious *Atheiſtical* Dictators, boaſt themſelves the only men of *Learning* and *Diſcretion*; ſtigmatizing all others, as ignorant Ruſticks, and illiterate Buffoon's, that have nothing of *generoſity*, who dare not ſet their mouths againſt *Heaven*, and defie the Authority of their *Maker*. Now to blunt the edge of this *ſcoffing Wit*, which boaſts of ſo

eaſie a *Victory* over *deſpiſed Chriſtianity*; Pray conſider, that their onely argument is taken from *Senſe*, unleſs they enforce them with *Oaths*, the uſual Graces and Ornaments, and the only *proof* they have for ſuch *wild diſcourſes*; and are to be pitied and pray'd for, but not *diſputed* with, leſt we ſpread the *contagion*, having to do with ſuch as had rather *looſe Heaven*, than live *ſoberly*; and have no other reaſon why they ſay there is no God, but becauſe 'twould be well for them there was none. 'Tis a ſtrange deluſion that hath infatuated theſe abſurd Animals, that they dare ſport with the flames of Hell, in ſcoffing at God and Goodneſs, and the ſame moment *ſtartle* at their own *Shadow*, frighted with the noiſe of *Thunder*, and are as fearful of being *alone* in the night, as other *vermine* are of light and company.

O quam multos dominos habet, qui unum non habet!

Every ſurprizing accident *skares* them from their *Principles*; there being nothing more evident, than that the greateſt

greateſt Atheiſt is alwaies the moſt notorious Coward. Thus we read of *Antiochus*, when he enjoyed the conſtant ſeries of a ſmiling fortune, boaſted himſelf *Superiour to God himſelf*; but when the inconſtant Goddeſs withdrew her Beams, and appear'd unto him under a cloud of Troubles, he chang'd his note; for having received a fall out of his Chariot, and his inſolency curb'd by an immediate blow from Heaven, he could ſay then, as too many of our *Atheiſts* do upon the aſſault of a *diſeaſe*, and the fears of death (*Pray God it be not then too late*)

Juſtum eſt hominem mortalem ſubditum eſſe Deo.

It is meet and requiſite for mortal men to be ſubject to the immortal God. Tell me, I pray you, that pretend to be ſo great maſters of Reaſon, whether 'tis not more agreeable to the principles of right Reaſon, to believe a *God*, than deny it; if ſo, then give over (ye men of ſenſe) thoſe ſordid extravagancies, that render you *Clowns* to Heaven. *Burlesk* no more upon God,

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nor caſt diſgrace upon the *holy* and *bleſſed Trinity*: For if frail man compacted of infirmities is ſo jealous of his *Honour*, that (by the commands of Hell) he thinks himſelf oblig'd to *duel* him that ſtains it; How will God Almighty be jealous in taking *vengeance* againſt ſuch as blaſpheme his *Godhead*, neglect their own *Salvation*, and chooſe rather to venture their whole *Happineſs* in gratifying their corruptions, than provide for their own *Safety* by examining their *groundleſs ſurmiſes*? And *you that have better learned Chriſt*, be intreated to ſhun the Society of ſuch *ſcoffing Atheiſts*, who would *laugh* you into *eternal mourning*, and mock you from the exerciſe of Piety, till the Devil *claim* you by *Preſcription*. By no ſtratagem or device hath the Devil ſo much *diſheartned* from *Religion*, and *afflicted* men for it, as by *Scoffers*, who make themſelves the main promoters of his *Cauſe*, and advancers of his *Kingdom*: by no *methods* hath the Devil more *inſtructed* thoſe that would be bad, and *diſcouraged* others from being *good*, than by theſe *accurſed* inſtruments of Cruelty. Where

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the Jews could not withſtand the miraculous coming of the *Meſſias* any other way, they took ſhelter in a *taunting proverb, Can any good come out of Nazareth?* When the convincing power of *Miracles* had proclaim'd his *Divinity*, and *the Works that Chriſt did had declar'd he was the Son of God*, they had no way to prevent believing on him, but *Is not this the Carpenters Son?* Thus alſo fares it with *Religion*, that they who have their minds *eſtranged* from it, from thence take an occaſion to *ſcorn* and *deride* it. But if nothing elſe can perſwade you to riſe out of *the Chair of Peſtilence*; See the examples of Gods *Judgments* upon *Scorners: Iſhmaël* mocking *Iſaac*, was *baniſhed* the pleaſant land, and expoſed as a prey to forreigners: *Michal* mocking *David* for dancing before the *Ark*, was puniſhed with the *ſorrow* & ſhame of *barrenneſs*. *Machivel* that mocking *Atheiſt*, dyed in the priſon of *Florence*; and *Julian* that made *Chriſtianity a deriſion*, expired in a moſt hideous and *cruel* manner. Nothing is more juſt and equitable, than for the *impudent* in ſin, to be *daſhed* out of *countenance*, and to be beaten with their

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own Weapons; for *the Lord ſcorneth the ſcorners*, and will mock at their Calamities when they come, who mock'd at God before they was inflicted: take heed therefore you *offend none of God's little ones*, thoſe that begin to *taſt* ſweetneſs in the *Word of God*, and the promiſes of the *world* to come; but rather ſtrengthen the *weak* hands, and the *feeble* knees, and encourage all men in the way of Goodneſs. But Changelings ſometimes paſs for the Babes of Chriſt, and while I am pleading for the *Righteous*, I would not patronize a *counterfeit* in the ways of *malice* and *diſobedience*, in the ways of *guilt* and *diſſimulation*, (which many now take for the *ſtraight paths* of Chriſt). I think we do well to ſtop your courſe, and to *deride* your deviation: but far be it from us to *retard* you in the ways of *Jeſus*, *the good old way wherein you may find life for your Souls*; the ways that are ſtrewed with *Love*, *Peace*, *Meekneſs*, and *Humility*; woe be unto us if we call you not (as we do daily) to walk therein: but if any by *precept*, or *example*, put you from the purſuit of theſe real Graces, *Væ deridenti*, *woe be to that*

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man, by whoſe deriding Tongue the offence comes.

The next member that upon arraignment will be found guilty of *Offences*, is the *Eye*; a part of the body endued with ſo much *excellency*, and withal ſo much *iniquity*, that I know not whether it may more invite your admiration or your ſorrow; for when the *heart* corrupts the *eye*, and the eye betraies the heart, it ſtains its own glory, by agreeing with the *mind* in the ſervice of Iniquity; it renders the eye an egregious offender: for if with a *greedy* aſpect it *looks* upon food, without charging the ſtomach, 'tis guilty of *Gluttony*; if on a woman to *luſt* after her, 'tis guilty of *Adultery*; if it beholds riches with *covetous* deſires, it hath committed *Robbery*; if on anothers *good*, with an eye of *evil*, it commits the ſin of *Envy*; which is the meaning of our Saviours reprehenſion, *Is thine eye evil, becauſe mine is good?* But as if the vice of the *husbandmen* were transformed into a virtue, ſinful man is continually *reviving* it, in repining that his *fellow-labourer* in the vineyard that came in late, ſhould receive *equal* wages with himſelf, who

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like *Cæsar* and *Pompey* can endure no equal, nor second to rival him in his victorious Atchievements: Hence it is that Envy is called the *green-sickneß of the Soul*, that feeding upon cinders, or rubbish, *contracts the stature*, impallids the body to a *hectick leanneß*, and through default of the liver, spots the face with *gutta Rosacea*, *as the effigies of the man by whom the offence comes.* This is he that cannot endure the abilities of any, should be admitted competitors with his *feeble* acquirements; thinks illustrious *merits* an upbraiding his own *defects*, and that he is lighted into envy by the splendour of his rivals virtues, against whom he hath no other quarrel, than what the *Africans* have against the Sun, *Urit fulgore suo*; or what one had against *Demosthenes's* candle, onely because it *stood in his light*. This sin of *Envy* renders men more vitious than *devils*; for we nowhere read, that they envy one another: Besides, their malice ariseth from the want of that good which they have lost, and these envy that good which another hath found. And now through the suggestions of *Malice*, the sinner wracks himself with

jealousies

jealouſies and ſurmiſes, to perſwade himſelf each *Candidate* is his enemy, that he hath a greater ſhare in the love of the *Popularity*; and this puts him upon *baſe and ungenerous employments*, to ſatisfie an *unreaſonable* and *impatient jealouſie*; ſends him as a *ſpy* into every dark corner, to diſcover that which only dwells in his own *imagination*; and all this while he hath perhaps been fighting with his own *Chagrene Ghoſt*, and hath had no other enemy, than his own ill nature. This makes it a kind of *miſery* to be excellent, becauſe it is ſure to be attended with *malignity*; it being the conſtant guiſe of *poorer ſpirits*, thoſe *brats of mouldy clay*, to erect obelisks to their own *obſcure bearings*, out of the *ruines* of others: and ſince they are unable to raiſe themſelves to the eſteem of their adverſaries, they endeavour by Calumny (*or the exerciſe of their befriended, not acquired authority*) to bring them down to the ſame ignoble level with themſelves. This is a ſtone of *Stumbling*, and a rock of *offence*, for Chriſtians to malign each other: *for he that hateth his brother is in darkneſs until now; but he that loveth abideth* Joh. 1.2.9.

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in the light, and there is no occaſion of ſtumbling in him. But that which aggravates the offence, and makes the ſin become ſo *exceſſively ſinful*, is, that the only cauſe for which the *envious* man is enraged againſt his brother, is that *for which* Cain *ſlew* Abel, *becauſe his own works were evil, and his brothers good.* And that this hath been the conſtant practiſe of this deviliſh vice, will appear when we further conſider, that for this cauſe *Joſephs* brethren ſold him; and it was virtue in *David*, that provoked *Saul* to ſeek his life; and the *Ninevites* repentance, that diſtempered *Jonas*; for this cauſe (namely unparallel'd goodneſs) 'twas, that the Jews conſpired the death of our Saviour, and which made the Roman Governour endeavour his releaſement, becauſe he knew *that for envy they had delivered him.* This is even the nature of envy, to aſſault the *worthieſt* perſons, whoſe eminency ſhines beyond others in glorious Actions, but meddles not with ſuch as be of meaner quality. But to perſwade men from the practiſe of this unchriſtian and unmanlike vice, know, that Divine Juſtice hath ap-

appointed this ſin to be the torment of it ſelf; for Envy, like cankered Braſs, feeds upon his own ſubſtance.

Juſtius invidia nihil eſt, quæ protinus ipſum
Authorem rodit excrutiatq; ſuum.

But I ſhall rather preſcribe *Antidotes* againſt this poyſon, than ſhew the puniſhment that attends it: and to that purpoſe, if thou ſeeſt another abound in Learning, Judgment, or the like commendables, be not ſo envious to thy ſelf, as to be vexed at that which may better or inform thee, if thou wouldſt make a right uſe thereof.

If thou hear him defend the *Truth* with applauſe of others, let not a *perverſe* emulation tempt thee to maintain the contrary, to the *ſubverting* of the hearers: for there is, ſaith *Nazianzen*, a happineſs even to be *overcome*. And it is far better to be *honeſtly* vanquiſhed, and quit the field, than to obtain an inglorious *Victory*, with the ſhipwrack of true Religion. If thou ſee another endued with ſpiritual Graces, as *Virtue*, *Knowledge*,

Temperance, Patience; here is matter for thy *godly* Emulation, but not for thy bitter Envying: thou ſhouldſt ſtrive to *match* him in the exerciſe of holy duties, but not to damp his alacrity by malitious detraction. According to our Saviours precept, *our light ſhould ſo ſhine before men, that they ſeeing our good Works, may glorifie our Father which is in Heaven.* Therefore let not thy envy be the cloud to *dim* the light of anothers works, and thereby hinder ſo much *glory*, as might redound to thy heavenly Father. Although ſuch a man were thy *enemy*, yet becauſe Almighty God is *glorified* by him, he ought to be thy friend: and now becauſe God is glorified by him, ſhall he therefore be thy *enemy? God forbid!* Remember whoſe work he is doing, and encourage his *faint* endeavours with the addition of thy ſervice, and help to effect what thou dayly prayeſt for: That *Gods will may be done on Earth* by thee, and thy fellow-ſervants, *as it is in Heaven* by the glorious Angels.

Chryſoſt.

The Tongue is now *wormed*, and the *Cataract of Envy* over the Eye is couch'd

touch'd; but I must lead you on with *Ezekiel* to more abominations, to more offences in our lives; they are of two sorts, *injurious* and *exemplary*.

First, The *injurious offences* are apparently indigitated in our Saviours words: for who receiveth his *little ones*, but their hopeful benefactors? and who on the other side gives them *offence*, but their *spiteful opposers*? And here our old Complainants are ready to commence their suit, in reckoning up the hard measures offered to their Zealous guides, who are exil'd their Pulpits, stript of their Maintenance, rated, fined, persecuted, as their word is; whereas the contrary is most evident, being treated, through the kindness of some, and the remisness of others, more favourably than the Law allows, and their practice deserves. And when they fall under any pecuniary mulct or corporal restraint, *their punishment is of themselves*; they cannot be called *innocent Sufferers*, but *injurious Agressors*. I would to God they would once learn to saddle the right Ass: for, as St. *Augustin* said of *Sara* and *Hagar*,

the Maid did more perſecute the Miſtreſs by her *pride* and *ſaucineſs*, than the Miſtreſs did her Maid by the *ſeverity* of her diſcipline: and notwithſtanding the Diſſenters clamorous Charge, upon a *Melius inquirendum*, 'twill be found, that *Schiſmaticks* do more *perſecute and offend the Church*, than *holy Church* doth perſecute or offend them: and ſo unhappy conſequences have been the iſſue of their lucrous ingannations, that the Church better endured the *Swords* of *Tyrants*, than the tongues of *Schiſmaticks*; for while we *ſmarted*, Unity remained; but while theſe *Anticeremonian Bigots* are believed, the *Church* is obnoxious to ruine, by the *ſeeds of diviſion* they ſowe amongſt us.

But that which ſpreads the contagion, is, that the Schiſmatical tenents of ſome *Non-conforming* brethren, like *ill weeds* in a *fat ſoil*, have done greater miſchief through the good opinion men have of their *perſonal* Sanctity. *They are good men!* and (by a bad conſequence) *all they do muſt be ſo accounted.*

But what can the *pretence* amount to, when examin'd by an *intelligent* and

and *unprejudiced* ſoul? for 'tis not flouriſhing the banner of *goodneſs*, that can priviledge men from either errour or ſinning: neither ought the unreprovableneſs of mens converſe in other things, countenance their *Schiſmatical* opinions, or *Church-dividing* practices, againſt the light of divine Scripture, and right Reaſon. Let mens *Gifts* and *Graces* be as large as *they themſelves* would have it believed, muſt not men of honeſty live under Laws, *and ſubmit to every Ordinance of man for the Lords ſake?* Surely however they whiſper the contrary, they dare not ſpeak it aloud, leſt they be as openly convicted *to reſiſt the Ordinance of God, and purchaſe to themſelves Damnation.*

Theſe are the gildings and varniſh of thoſe ſelfiſh intrigues, whereby men of good hearts, but *weak heads*; and women, who have *weakeſt* judgments, but *ſtrongeſt wills and paſſions*, are cozened into a good opinion of theſe painted out-ſides, to embrace a Cloud inſtead of *Juno*, and forſake a *peaceable Church*, to be members of a *contentious Conventicle*. I take no delight in ſearching the wounds, or

displaying the faults of a religious Party; but in so noble a Cause 'twould be a sin to hold my peace: *Meam injuriam patienter tuli, injuriam contra sponsam Christi ferre non potui.* 'Tis a *deplorable offence*, that men of excellent parts and improvements, which might be eminently *serviceable* to the *Church of God*, should abuse their *learning* to the maintenance of a *Schism*; and instead of winning souls to Heaven, with *busie* and *ill-boding* diligence compass sea and land to draw proselytes to a *party*. How many Kilns and Barns (the present threshing-floors of discontented Jebusites) are turned into *Trojan* horses, from whence *publick* mischiefs proceed! How many souls are *heedlesly* led by these stubborn and furious guides, into a bitter distaste of their *common Mother* the *Church!* how many into a *Peevish* disesteem of their *able* and *pious* Instructers! yea, which is most lamentable, into a true *loathing* of their spiritual Food. But to return to *injurious offences*, cast your eyes I beseech you, about you, and every corner will afford you such, as under a *pretence of Purity*, root up the Vineyard

of

of *God*, *affront Majesty*, *scorn Laws*, and pursue their *hateful designs*, with all the violence of *disloyal* and *affrighting* insinuations: whose deadly Talons (like the soaring Eagle) are onely bowed in (I fear) for want of an *opportunity* to prey and ravin. Another way of discerning the humour and malice of *injurious Sectaries*, is in the bitter *Colycinthos* they shred into the pots of those profits they relish not. Let some *Reverend Divine* but cross and discountenance *Schismatical* fancies; let him but walk in the waies of *Meek obedience* and *Humble* concord, he shall be *defam'd* in their Conventicles, and called either a Tory, a Papist, or at best a Papist in Masquerade; he shall be *defrauded* in their Contracts, excluded their Houses, deprived utterly of all their *Contributions*: his heart shall be *broken* with dayly *affronts* and oppositions; his intents *cross'd*, and his desires hinder'd: the *Reverence* due to his *Function* shall be detain'd; and by telling the Vulgar he is a man of Arbitrary Principles, he preacheth Obedience to Laws, he is therefore of a persecuting spirit. And by these arts having prejudiced

the Factious many, nothing but the *ſalt* ſcorn of a *ſour face* ſhall be caſt upon him. His domeſtick *neceſſities*, and painful maladies, ſhall be ſo far from any ſhare in their *aid*, or *pity*, that they ſhall rather become matter of *mirth* and *mockage* amongſt them: his *grave* ſhall be made for him, and his *knell* rung in the votes of unmerciful people, e're *God* takes him away: Nay, which is worſt of all, his *holy Labours* ſhall be deſpiſed, his *Rebukes* ſlighted, and his *Doctrine* tax'd; his *Church* either quite *forſaken*, or thinly reſorted to. And are not theſe *offences* enough to ſtumble one; Nay, to hinder the courſe of Chriſts Goſpel? to keep many *good wits* from entring upon a *Function*, that, in the *conſcientious* diſcharge of it, brings nothing but *barrenneſs* and *vexation*? Truly, if they can ſhew us no better fruit of their *boaſted* holineſs, like the barren ground the *Hebrews* are told of, they have a curſe at their elbow. *Væ injurianti, Wo be to that man, by whoſe injurious dealing the Offence comes.*

But injurious offences cannot be thought all that our Saviour meant; for

for when he puts thoſe caſes of an *offending Eye*, and *Hand*, and *Foot*, we underſtand it not of our own members, as if they ſhould offer us violence. We proceed therefore to the laſt block, the *exemplary offence*; and this I will devide into three parts, and in them ſhew you.

1. That *Offence* may be given by the *indiſcreet* management of a good work.

2. By the *unreaſonable uſe* of an indifferent thing: And

3. By the *foul example* of a work in its own nature evil.

1. In the performance of a *good work* commanded by God, we are not to *balk an offence*, but as much as in us lies to remove a *miſpriſion*. 'Tis better an offence ſhould be given, than any of Gods ſacred Truths ſhould be betray'd. *Si aliqui ſunt infirmi, & ſcientia deſtituuntur, non oportet ut nos eorum cauſa Chriſtiana libertate fraudemur*: what though ſome are weak, and deſtitute of knowledge, there is no reaſon that *we* for *their* cauſe ſhould be cheated of our *Chriſtian liberty*. *We muſt not regard their offence, who refuſe to be healed, unleſs* Pet. Martyr

unleſs we our ſelves become ſick. In thoſe works which fall not under a *ſtrict command*, we are to *do* that which we cannot *omit* without an *offence*; and though 'tis certain πανὶ λόγῳ ἀντικεῖται λόγος, nothing can be ſo ſpoken or done, but it may be ſpoken againſt: yet when we conſider that the *Ceremonies* of our Church (about which Diſſenters make their pretence to quarrel) are but *few* in *number*, are *ſignificant* in their *nature*, and *advantageous* to the grand deſigns of Religion in their *uſe*, our Chriſtian liberty conſiſts in this, *That we have leave to do them, without the imputation of Sin*: nay, 'tis ſo far from being a *Sin* or *Offence*, to comply with our neighbours in ſuch plainly innocent uſages, and *harmleſs* cuſtomes; or with the will of our *Governours*, when they command us ſuch things, that it would be both *ſin* and *ſcandal* to refuſe ſo to do: for our refuſing to *comply* with either of theſe, can hardly proceed from any better principle, than a *proud affectation of Singularity*, or at beſt from a *ſuperſtitious Scrupuloſity*. St. *Paul* would have us abſtain from *every appearance of evil*; but wills us not to

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think every thing evil which *some men* call ſo; for in that *good old way* which the covenanting Conſiſtorians & blind Papiſts call *Superſtition* & *Hereſie*, we may *truly* worſhip the God of our Fathers: *for God judgeth not as man judgeth.*

2. In the uſe of *indifferent things*, we have two lights to ſhew us our way; *Faith*, and *Charity*; Faith pondering the *nature* of the thing it ſelf, to ſettle the *wavering* conſcience: Charity preſcribing the *time* and *manner*, leſt we incur *danger*, and our weak brother *offence*. Truly a ſcandal taken from the uſe of *indifferent things*, if it proceed *meerly* of weakneſs and ignorance, is to be *pitied* and tender'd. The *Apoſtle* is full of warnings, ſerious warnings, *that we lay not a ſtumbling-block before our weak brother, that we cauſe him not to periſh for whom Chriſt dyed:* and for his own part avers, he would *eat no fleſh* as long as he lived, rather than *it ſhould ſtick in another mans ſtomach.* But doth he mean that his *weak brother* ſhould keep him *for ever* thus cautelous? Or doth he yield to their *infirmity* onely ſo long till the *truth* be taught him? Yea verily: for if our *weak brother* af-

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ter a clear instruction *will* yet remain *blind*, and *stumble* at every thing, his *weakness* is no longer to be *yielded* unto, but to be *corrected*. *Pertinacia potius quam imbecillitas*, saith a learned Divine; you are *mistaken*, my *scrupulous* brethren, you are mistaken, 'tis *rather Obstinacy, than Infirmity*; 'tis *rather wilfulness, than weakness in you*, since there is nothing in our *worship* of God committed that is *unlawful*, or *omitted* that *is necessary*. You that are *Dissenters* contend for *trifles*, we for *order* and *obedience*: as for example, in our *English Church* many people stumble at our *publick Rites*, decent *Gestures*, and *Vestments*; and challenge us fiercely of these as offences. But give me leave to tell you, that these *ungrounded* notions, how plausible soever, are but the *dreams* of some misty *sleepy* brains: for the Devil, that he may keep the world under these *delusions*, 'tis his usual knack to *burthen* the forms of Gods Worship with *clamour* and *vulgar* prejudice, lest the *union* of Christians should *destroy* his Kingdom, or lessen his Subjects. I appeal to any *indifferent man*, whether it be not more *injurious*

to

to Christian liberty, to follow the *humorous dislikes* of *private* and *petulant* spirits, which require the omission, or to yield *obedience* to *lawful Authority*, which by mature advice *commands* the use of *such things*, as are otherwise, and in themselves, *equally indifferent* for use or forbearance. The respect of *private scandal* ceaseth, when *just authority* determines our liberty: and that *restraint* which proceeds from *special* duty, is of *superiour reason* to that which is deriv'd from *common charity*: We ought to bear a greater regard to our *publick Governours*, than to our *private* brethren; and be more careful to *obey* them, than *satisfie* these. 'Tis true, we are commanded *be not conformed unto this world*; but the main import of the words, and design of the Apostle, is in what follows: *But be ye transformed by the renewing of the mind*: Newness of mind, is that *Substantial* duty of Christianity, which makes all other things *lawful* unto us. To the *indifferent* things of the world we may *conform* for *quietness* sake; to the things of *decency* and *order*, we should conform for *conscience* sake; onely to the

Rom. 12. 2.

the *wickedneſs* of it we ſhould not faſhion our ſelves.

But ſince I know that our adverſaries out of intereſt cannot be quiet, but will (notwithſtanding all that can be ſaid to the contrary) load *innocent* Ceremonies with *ſcandalous* Epithets (*for by this craft they get their living*) let me demand of them, How came you ſo *weak*, that are ſo *pure*? How long hath the *lawfulneſs* of theſe things been *cleer'd* among you? what pains hath been taken by our *reverend Prelates*? What evincing arguments have fallen from the Lips and Pens of our reverend Divines? what ſtones of *offence* have we not removed, to make your way cleer? And now let the *world* judge, if our *holy Mother* the Church, who but maintains her *juſt Right* and Liberty, be to be taxed for *giving offence*, or not rather her *wilful Sons*, which *ſhut* their *eyes* againſt the light, to be *ſharply reproved* for their *wilful* diſobedience. Yet am I not ſo uncharitable to think, that every one which diſſents from the doctrine of this or that Church muſt be ſtigmatized for a Schiſmatick: No, if a diſſenter be *meek* and *modeſt*, *humble*

and

and *holy*, and makes no *breach* in the Church's *Unity*; ſuch a one hath the temper of a *ſober* Chriſtian, and will do no *miſchief* to Religion: but when diſſenting about *indifferent* things, is managed with *Pride* and *Paſſion*, *Rage* and *Malice*, tending to the *ſubverſion* of Government and *good Order*; Then 'tis manifeſt there is ſomething more in the caſe than *Conſcience*, and the man is become *Factious*. When a weak ſcruple againſt *the Sign of the Croſs*, ſhall make men *Rebels* againſt the *Crown*; when a *ſuperſtitious* abhorrence of a *white Veſture*, ſhall make us dye our garments in *blood*; and a *furious* zeal againſt an *Organ*, ſhall make men call for the confuſed noiſe of *Drums* and *Trumpets*, 'tis manifeſt they have loſt the temper of *ſober Chriſtians*, and deſerve the hateful name of *Rebels*, as well as Schiſmaticks. 'Tis a *ſtrange deluſion* that hath ſeized ſome which ſcruple at an innocent Ceremony, who againſt all *convictions* and armies of reaſon will be *troubled*, and will not underſtand; this is very bad; *but 'tis worſe that he ſhould think himſelf to be the more godly man, for being*

thus

thus troubled and diſeas'd; and that upon this account he ſhall fall out with his lawful Soveraign, calumniate his Actions, reproach his Counſellors, abuſe his ſubjects, and quarrel with his Government; and deſpiſe it; this man *nurſes* his ſcruple, and inſtead of curing a *Boyl*, dies of a *Cancer*: or is like a man that hath ſtrained his foot, and keeps his bed for eaſe; but by lying *long* there, falls into a *Lipothymie*, and that bears him to his grave. Thus calling themſelves to *doubtful diſputations*, (inſtead of practiſing known duties), they go on deceiving and being deceived, to their own diſcomfort here, and miſery hereafter. But I gladly ſhift the Scene; intreating my diſſenting and ſcrupulous brethren to remember, it is all our duties to obey and do what is *commanded*; not *judging* our Judges, but quietly ſubmitting to their *Injunctions, who watch for our ſouls, and muſt give an account to God.* But if ſo many miſchiefs and *offences* proceed from *indifferent things*, what ſhall we think of *groſs* and *infectious* evils, the *miſleading* acts of the vitious or indulgent Ruler, the *Riots* and *Rapines*

pines of the rich, the *leud* examples of *Church-men, Parents* and *Masters, domestick fails*, the *foul* slips of the *Religious*, the *mutual* seducements of men and women by scandalous habits, *Cum multis aliis*, &c.

The Ruler is first. As *Jacobs* Sheep brought forth Lambs agreeing in colour with the pill'd rods they cast their eyes on; so many people, either out of a *greedy hope* to thrive by a *servile* imitation, or out of a *vain* ambition to follow their betters, take courses of the same tincture with the *Scepters* of Authority. When the Clock strikes not in due season, we blame not the weights or movement, but the Clock-keeper; and whom are the fails of the Vulgar ascribed to, but their eminent Guides? Let *Baltazar* carouze in the *hallowed boles* of the Temple, and all the Court will pledge him: let Queen *Vasti* controul her husband, and all the scattered Dames in the Country-provinces will take the Reins into their own hands. *Why did the Heathens so furiously rage? who did the people imagine a vain thing?* The *Psalmographer* resolves us, *The Rulers of the earth*

took counſel together againſt the Lord, and againſt his Anointed. Who could imagine a people ſo laden with the favours of a gracious *Meſſiah*, that ſaw their *ſick* reſtored, their *blind* inlightened, their *lame* walking, and their *dumb* ſpeaking; yea, their *dead* bodies brought to life! Who would imagine after theſe *beneficial* works, they ſhould put him to ſo baſe and bitter a death? Had not *Herod* and *Pilat*, had not *Annas* and *Caiaphas*, had not the Chief Prieſts and the *Ruling Elders* took counſel together againſt the *Lord, and againſt his Anointed?* Therefore, as it the *guilt* of all this had ſtuck on the *Princes* and *Rulers*, the holy Pſalmiſt directs his advice to them onely: Be wiſe now therefore, *O ye Kings, be learned ye that are Judges of the Earth.* It is with men as with fiſhes, if the head begins to putrify, the body can be worth nothing; if the head be *ſick* what can the heart do but *faint*, and the body but *languiſh?* *If a Ruler hearken to lyes,* (ſaith *Solomon*) *all his ſervants are wicked.* And here turning our woe on the *Romiſh* and *Factious Grandees* that have hearkned to lyes,

and

and led people into *miſchievous* inventions: how are we bound to bleſs God for the *upright* and moderate ſway, the inoffenſive and meek carriage of our Royal Head, and his *ſubbordinate* Deputies, whoſe very *lives* may as well ſilence a ſaucy *Libeller*, as their authority?

But this word gives them another memento: *Authority* hath a *Sword* in her hand; and if ſhe *bear it in vain*, ſin is heartned, and *offences given*. The old Gyants were called *Nephilim*, Cadentes, not as if they fell from Heaven, but becauſe other men afrighted with their grim looks, were ready to fall down and ſwoon away. Among us, 'tis rather the over-*gentle*, than the *terrible* Rulers, are the right *Nephilim*, that make men fall into a cuſtome of ſinning: for as *Moſes* Rod caſt on the ground became a *Serpent*, ſo the Rod of *Juſtice* that falls from the *Magiſtrates* hands for earthly reſpects, what does it prove but a deſtroying, a poyſoning Serpent? therefore is it good Counſel given by the Son of *Syrac*, *Let no man ſeek to be a Judge, who is not able to take away iniquity, leſt at any time he fear the perſon of*

the mighty, and lay a ſtumbling-block in the way of uprightneſs. Honour on a Fools back is as Snow in Summer, as Rain in the time of Harveſt, not onely unfit for himſelf; but *pernitious* to others: for as Summer-Snows corrupt the Fruits, and Harveſt-Showers rot the Corn; ſo a weak Ruler is the ſpoil of a Country. And though we may thank God that even this way we are better provided, yet our Saviours Item (like *Philip's* boy) may ſtand for a Remembrance; when *ſin* and *partiality* would get admiſſion, *Væ Rectoribus*, wo be to the *exalted* man by whom the *offence* comes.

And now if oyled Paper would be writ on, I could try the Rich of this world how prone they are to ſcatter Offences; as St. *Paul* ſays, *They fal themſelves into divers ſnares and temptations*, and bring others into the ſame trap. Riches in the Hebrew Dialect have a name that implies *Stability*; they are called *Jechum*, as if they made a man to ſtand ſure: but if they make our *ſelves* ſtand, and *others* fall, what are they but *unrighteous Mammon?* Our Saviours Churl

Churl was arrayed in Purple, which is a bloudy colour; and how many of our great mens Robes are dyed in the *bloud* and *wrack*, and offensive spoil of their poor Neighbours; yea, in the *pillage* of the *Temples*? How many of these *dry Nurses* have Breasts great enough, but yield no Milk for the *Babes of Christ*, whose houses stand like Beech-trees, onely for *Beasts* and *Drunkards* to be sheltered under; or like *Oaks of Bashan* (as the Prophet speaks) that have nothing but Acorns for a few Swine, while the poor and indigent are deni'd fitting relief, and forced to rob, pilfer, and *offend* God, if not to challenge him of unjust partiality?

2. 'Tis another offence I take it in men of Quality, that many of them are become the *Patrons* of Schism, and instead of their true Mistris, that *heavenly* and *religious* Wisdom, that is both *pure and peaceable*, like Errant Knights in the Pores legend, have embraced an ugly Witch with her angry and fantastical face, the *masked* Hypocrisie of cunning *Zealots*; that such men whom our *Pulpits* have spewed out for retaining

their *old Principles* of *Diſobedience, Tumult, Schiſm,* or *Hereſie,* ſhall by theſe *great* ones be *hug'd* and liſtened to as the onely *Oracles* of Infallibility. O how they *bleſs* and *admire* themſelves (and are proclaimed by others) as the grand *Sticklers* of their *Party,* becauſe they have a *Nonconforming Levite to their Prieſt!* Is not this an *offence,* that you that impoſe *Laws* upon us, are the *firſt* breakers of them your ſelves, and think you *do God good ſervice,* while you fight againſt him, *in diſturbing the peace of the Church and Kingdom?* Combuſtible matter is not more incident to ruine by its vicinity to the flames, than your *inferiours* are by tracing your ſteps. You know well, the *honour* and *reſpect* that belongs to your *qualities*, cannot exempt you from the common Obligation and *Law of Religion*; but the greater your perſons are, the more *enforcing* is your *intereſt* to be religious, becauſe your Examples are more leading and influential. Be not, I beſeech you, the Ring-leaders into *Schiſm,* but be Followers of ſolid Piety and ſincere Religion: for this will *adorn your bearings,*

Ubi ſublimior prærogativa, ibi major culpa. *Salvian,* lib. 4. de gubernat. Dei.

rings, and ennoble your *Souls* and *Names* in the lasting Records of Heaven. And on the contrary, wo be to them that adde fuel to the fire of Dissention: *Væ diviti, Wo be to the man by whose abused riches or honours the offence comes.*

3. 'Tis a great exemplary *offence* in the judgment of all the *sober* and *unprejudiced* world, that our *Nonconforming* Brethren give, in separating from the *Church* of *England*, because in our publick Service we use Set Forms of Prayer: and because they think themselves innocent, though but for the advantage of accusing us first, as laying these *stumbling-blocks* in the way to *Peace* and *Unity*; I shall take off this *Sanctimonious Vizor*, (made onely to startle the *unwary admirers*, that gaze on the outside onely) and make it appear to all that are not guarded with the Shield and Buckler of *Irrationality*, *That they themselves are the men by whom the offence comes.*

And that I may leave them without quarrel, I shall make them both Judge and Party, and endeavour to convict or acquit them by a Jury of

their own packing, and their own Creatures being Judges. This makes Religion *contemptible* (ſaith Mr. *Baxter*) *when we are perceived to place Religion in unwarrantable Separations, and affected Singularities from a true Church, and have no other pretence, but that they pray by a Book, and we pray without one:* Theſe are the Complaints that make our Houſes and Streets ring, that our *Governours* are Perſecutors, becauſe they would compel you to hear a man that is *Conformable*, and *pray* with ſuch as uſe the *Liturgie*, and *communicate with a Parochial Congregation.* Theſe are the *no Crimes* you charge on the *Churches* ſcore, and the *foundation* on which you build the Wall of *Separation*, and eſtrange your ſelves from *the beſt Church in the world.* But how you will anſwer this to God Almighty in the Great and Terrible Day, is my wonder and aſtoniſhment: And therefore entreat you to conſider whether theſe are *ſufficient* cauſes to make *Rents* and *Diviſions* in the Church, and raiſe Contentions and *Heart-burnings* amongſt thoſe which agree in all *fundamental* truths. No,

but

but rather on the contrary, if you had (as *God bethanked* you have not) a *juſt* cauſe to refuſe *Communion* with our Church in ſome inſtances; yet you ought not therefore to proceed to a *total Separation* from it, or to erect *new Churches* in contradiſtinction to us, or gratifie the *humorous* diſlikes of them that do, by joyning with them. You often call us Popiſh Prelatical Prieſts; but if you will believe Mr. *Baxter*, he ſays, *You are the great Factors of* Rome, *and Upholders of the Triple Crown: For* (ſaith he) *thouſands have been drawn to* Popery, *or* confirmed *in it by* your Separation *already*; *and I am perſwaded that all the Arguments elſe in* Bellarmine, *and all other Books, have not done ſo* much *to make* Papiſts *in* England, *as the* Diviſions among our ſelves; *yea, ſome Profeſſors of* ſtrictneſs *in Religion, and of great eſteem for* godlineſs, *have turned* Papiſts *themſelves, when they were* giddied *and* wearied *with turning*. Defence of the *Principle of Love* p. 52.

They know but little of the world, who perceive not that our Differences are the Contrivances of the *Romiſh Cabal* to ruine us: Read the Biſhop of *Rhodes*'s Hiſtory of *Henry* the Fourth

Fourth of *France*, and *Campanella's* Spaniſh Monarchy; where, after a long diſcourſe of the intended Invaſion of *England* by the Monarchs of *Spain* and *France* (incited thereto by the Commands and Benedictions of *Rome*, as well as their own *Ambition*) they eſpecially declare their judgements of the means and inſtruments to be employ'd for the *Ruine* of the *Engliſh* Church in this ſort, that there was no better Artifice, than *by cauſing Diviſions and Diſſentions among the Engliſh:* And to this purpoſe they adviſed it as the onely way, to erect certain *Schools* and *Academies* in *Flanders*, that the Students thereof may diſſeminate Seeds of *Diviſion* in *Natural* and *Theological* Sciences; which would *diſcompoſe* their Opinions, and *unſettle* their Judgments: for (ſay they) the *Engliſh* are enclined to *Novelties*, and are no leſs violent in *defending* them. And how *conſiderable* the effects of this Contrivance has been, their late *horrid* Conſpiracies againſt our gracious *King*, do manifeſt. And you, my diſſenting Brethren, of whom it may be ſaid, as *Chemnitius* ſpake of the Monks concerning

cerning *Pelagianiſm*, You defie the Heretick, and foſter the Hereſie: for while you ſeparate from us, you do no leſs than make your ſelves Agents to accompliſh their deſignes, in overthrowing a Church *you acknowledge to be true*, and promote the Errours of Antichriſt.

Many ſad Examples might be produced to this purpoſe; but I delight not to vex a *Wound* by a continued application of *Corroſives:* I ſhall therefore proceed to anſwer the main Objections againſt the uſe of our *Common-prayer*-book; the firſt of which is, *Vid.* Dr. *Aſhton's* Poſtſcript to the caſe of Scandal

Object. Praying by a Set Form, is a humane invention, and ſinful, becauſe not commanded in Scripture.

Anſw. In anſwering whereof, I muſt invoke again the aſſiſtance of Mr. *Baxter*, (for they that raiſe theſe Spectrums are beſt skill'd in laying them:) "If by falſe Worſhip, ſaith "he, you mean *forbidden* or not *com-* "*manded*, we (i. e. the *Presbyterians*) "*worſhip God falſly every day, and in* "*ſome part of the matter, very oft* our "*Diſorders, Confuſions, Tautologies,* "and *unfit* Expreſſions are all *forbid-* Lib. id. pag. 53. ad 60.

"*den,*

"*den*, and ſo falſe Worſhip: and if "God *prohibit* it in the *Liturgie*, he "*prohibits* the ſame in *extemporate* "*Prayers*; in which ſome good "Chriſtians are as *failing* as the Li- "turgy. And as the words of the "*Liturgie* are not commanded in "*Scripture*, ſo neither are the words "of our *extemporate* or *ſtudied* Ser- "mons or *Prayers*. God hateth e- "very *ſin* in every *Prayer*, but he ha- "teth *the avoiding of Prayer and due* "*Communion much more*; and you "but ſtrain at *Gnats* and ſwallow "*Camels*, while you thus eagerly con- "tend for the Shadow, and let the "Subſtance glide from you; giving "us cauſe to think theſe *Niceties* are "but *the Bones that the Devil throws* "*amongſt us to break our Teeth with*, "*and in the mean ſpace reject the whol-* "*ſome Food of our Souls.*

Open your Eyes, I beſeech you, and you will eaſily diſcern how you are *impoſed* on, and made the *Engines* of their *Malice*, who would deſtroy both *us* and *you*. Methinks I hear the *Papiſts*, *Independents*, *Anabaptiſts*, and *Quakers*, hiſſing each Party on, ſaying, *There, there, ſo would we have*

it;

it: One while crying, Throw *Dirt* enough on the *Surplice*, and be ſure ſome will *ſtick*; call the *ſigne* of the *Croſs* the Mark of the *Beaſt*; tear in pieces their *Liturgie*, and call it *the Popiſh Maſs-book:* Another Sect ſaying, *Bate them nothing*; and others, *Stand it out, and yield to nothing*; with a deal more of this inſignificant *Jargon:* Who are well aſſured, that if there be once a right Underſtanding, and conſequently a mutual Agreement betwixt the *Epiſcopal* and *Preſbyterian* Parties, they muſt of neceſſity dwindle into their *Original* Nothing; or like rotten Houſes, when the ſubſtantial *Props* they lean on are taken away, moulter to dirt, and bury themſelves in their own Ruines. Have a care therefore you warm not theſe *Vipers* any longer in your boſoms, by eſpouſing their *Quarrels:* for if ever they come to be ſtrengthned with *power*, will turn their ſtings againſt their Nouriſhers; as the *Independents* have done againſt you once already.

Object. But the *Covenant* (*i.e.* the Scotch Covenant) (ſay they) wherein we have lifted up our hands to the moſt

moſt High, makes it unlawful to hold Communion with any that uſe a Liturgy.

Anſw. I ſhall again make bold with Mr. *Baxter* for this reaſon, that Lawyers affirm, there needs no greater conviction of an *Offender*, than the *Confeſſion* of one of the *Complices*: His words in anſwer to this Objection are theſe: "No man of us all hath need or ought "to go to the Covenant to know "what is his duty in the *Worſhip of* "*God*, but onely to the *Scriptures*: "for if *Scripture* make it not a duty, "the *Magiſtrates Law* will make it a "*ſin*; and if *Scripture* make it *not a* "*ſin*, the Magiſtrates *Command* will "make it a *duty*. And in *p.* 9. and *p.* 88. of his *Defence of the Principles of Love*, reſolves it thus: "To pre-"fer *no* publick Worſhip, or a *worſe*, "before the *Liturgie*, is *deformation* "and prophaneneſs: *for all the refor-*"*med Churches in Chriſtendom do pro-*"*feſs to hold Communion with the* "*Church of* England *in their Liturgie*, "if they come amongſt us where 'tis "uſed: Therefore it ſeems to me to "be *Perjury* and *Covenant-breaking*, "either to prefer *no* publick Worſhip "be-

" before the *Liturgie*, or *to refuſe Com-*
" *munion with the Churches that uſe it,*
" *as a thing meerly on that account un-*
" *lawful.*

Conſider further, that your Separation ſavours of Novelty, (which among the Wiſe and Holy, without any further aggravation, renders it ſcandalous) and our practice correſponds with Antiquity, whoſe cuſtom in the firſt and pureſt times was, to pray by Forms: Nay, the *Antients* pronounc'd it a *ſin* to do otherwiſe in their *publick Devotions*. And though I urge not their Practices and Opinions, as Principles of *infallible* verity, to *command* your belief; yet I hope you will admit them as *grounds of credibility*, to *facilitate* your aſſent, being handed to us by thoſe that cannot be imagined *not to know*, being ſo *near*; nor be ſuſpected to *combine* ſlalſly to impoſe on us, being ſo *pious*. And if you want an Example, take it from the Diſciples; who out of a ſenſe of their own wants, beſpake their Maſter, thus: *Teach us to pray, as John taught his Diſciples.*

I beſeech you therefore, conſider in *time*, what you are doing: for if

Mr.

Mr. *Baxter* prophecies right, he tells you, *That Separating will at laſt ruine the ſeparate Churches themſelves: for no inſtance can be given* (ſaith he) *of a ſeparate Church of a hundred years ſtanding.* To conclude, the ſame Author ſaith, *The Proteſtant Religion muſt be kept up by the means of the Pariſh-Miniſters, and by the Doctrine and Worſhip then performed; and they that think and endeavour that which is contrary to this, of what ſide ſoever, ſhall have the hearty thanks and concurrence of the Papiſts.* O that now, my diſſenting Brethren, you would be perſwaded to lay aſide all *prejudice* and *partiality*, *ſelf-ends* and intereſts, *and follow the things that make for peace:* Suffer your *Reaſons* to awake; put on *Modeſty*, be clothed with Humility, and call no men, or decent Cuſtom, Popiſh or Antichriſtian, till you are aſſured by an infallible ſigne it is ſo; leſt you be found *fighters againſt God, and ſlanderers of your Brethren:* Be not *raſh* cenſurers, but judge *righteous judgment*, leſt you abuſe the truth it ſelf, *and call the Spouſe of Chriſt an Harlot.*

The Church of *England* is bare-

fac'd,

fac'd, hath no *Idols* to obſcure, no ſpiritual *Cheat* with which to delude you; for the repreſenting of which, we ſhould ſtand either in need of *darkneſs*, or a *falſe light*: we have nothing in our *publick profeſſion* which the *wiſeſt* men, the *moſt pious* Chriſtians, may not *practice*; nothing in our *Faith* which they ought not *ſtedfaſtly* to believe. It is onely want of Enquiry, and a ſober Examination, that the *purity* of our Churches *Doctrine* is not more generally *embraced*; 'tis becauſe the calmneſs and *ſobriety* of its *Devotion*, the moderation of its *Diſcipline*, the largeneſs of its *Charity*, are not more impartially enquired into, that men miſtake us, *divide* from our *Communion*, trouble the world with their *impertinent* noiſe and clamour, and adminiſter matter of *offence* to many thouſands in *England*, who are hardened into an utter neglect of Godlineſs by the unwarrantable *Singularities*, and the ſcandalous ſins, eſpecially of thoſe Profeſſors that have been moſt addicted to *ſinful Separations*; without receiving *occaſion*, or giving a reaſon for it.

And to conclude, I am afraid that

all those *Scruples* that have been urged to vindicate a *Separation* from our *Communion*, will be found too light at *the day of the Lord*, to counterpoise the vast guilt of *Schism* and *Disobedience*. Could you make it appear that your Salvation was in the least *hazarded* by Communion with us; if you could not have *Peace*, but upon those ill terms of parting with *Truth* and *Holiness*; could you demonstrate that in *any thing* we are departed from the *true Church*, your Separation was warrantable: but since 'tis evident our Church hath preserved intire *that Faith which was once delivered to the Saints*, without any *loss* or *innovation*; since all the Laws and Rules of *holy* and Christian life, are by our Church *taught*; since men may *conform* to all the Constitutions of our *Church*, and yet be as *holy* as the *best* of Saints in any Age of the world; since there is nothing herein *commanded*, that ever God did forbid; and since all this *we are able to prove* by the cleerest Demonstrations, it must necessarily follow, they incur a Wo that call good evil, and light darkness.

4. 'Tis no less a heinous *offence* also

to

to ſeparate from a true Church, under a pretence that notoriouſly *ſinful Members* are received into *Communion* with it. This is to ſtrain at a *Gnat*, and ſwallow a *Spider*; and to prevent an *imaginary* guilt of Pollution by others, incur a real guilt of *Schiſm* in themſelves. And though by diſpencing with *Humility* and *Charity*, they magnifie themſelves, and *brand* thoſe they ſeparate from, with the diſgraceful Epithets of *ungodly* and *profane*, and with the *Whore* in the Proverbs, *wipe their mouths*, and ſay, *they have done no harm*; yet in the judgment of St. *Paul*, the ſin of Separation is ſo dangerouſly infectious, that the perſons guilty of it are to be ſet in the *firſt* rate of Offenders, and to be *ſhunned* as ſoon as deſcried: *Mark them that cauſe Diviſions and Offences, contrary to the Doctrine you have learned, and avoid them.* Diviſions are the *Intelligences* that put the Orbs of *Offences* into *motion*, and are the prime *ſubverſion* of the Church; which otherwiſe is rarely endamaged: for whilſt it is *united*, Satan is not admitted, nor *Scandals* ſtarted; which makes the *Apoſtle* in another place ſo

Rom. 16. 17. σκοπεῖν eſt attentè, diligenter, quaſi hoſtes è ſpiecula obſervetis. Beza in loc.

passionately resent the injury offered to the Church by Divisions, that he wishes they were *cut off* that trouble it, by unsetling and removing its Votaries from their first Station.

Ἀναστατοῦντες.

And you will have no cause to think this a severe process, since there is *more mischief* threatned to the Church of God, and *less hopes of recovery* in a *Separatist*, than a more notified *Malefactor*: A debauch'd man, if discreetly reprehended, will *blush* and *tremble* at his Miscarriage; but an *Ableptick Schism-Master* will disdain, insult, and spurn at him, that by a modest Reproof would *turn him from the errour of his way*; besides, a Sect-maker disturbs the *peace* of the Church, tears its *Unity*, and paves a Causey to *destruction*, whilst the other onely perverts himself, and disquiets but his own Conscience. But admit some of the *Members* of our Church were as bad as they would render them, it makes no *Pallizado* for their *Conventicle*: for as long as the Church sojourneth on Earth, bad men will be mixed with the good; and they deserve a *sharp reprehension* (in the opinion of Mr. *Calvin*) *that tumultuously*

Calvin, in Mat. 13. 36

depart

depart from the Church, or by unſeaſonable rigidneſs endeavour to overthrow it. And Chriſt Jeſus in propounding this Parable (ſaith the ſame Author) would *bridle* and *moderate* their Zeal who think it *unlawful* to have Communion with none but *pure Angels*; and they that prepoſterouſly make haſte to root out all that diſpleaſeth them, do as much as in them is, prevent *Chriſts Judgment*, and uſurp *the Angels Office.*

Mr. *Perkins* tells us, that *faults in the manners of Profeſſors, is no warrant for our Separation: for tho vices* (ſaith he) *appear in the lives of Miniſters and People; ſo long as true Religion is taught, and the Sacraments duely adminiſtred, it is a Church, and we may not depart from it.* Expoſ. on St. *Jud*, v. 9. Amplified on *Gal.* 1. 2

Mr. *Hilderſham* makes it is Doctrinal Obſervation upon the fourth of St. *John* 22. *That thoſe Aſſemblies that enjoy the Word and Doctrine of Salvation, though they may have many corruptions in them, are to be acknowledged the true Churches of God, and ſuch as none of the faithful may make ſeparation from.* Lecture the 36.

I am almoſt aſſured, they would

think it little leſs than *Sacrilege*, not to allow theſe men to be *theirs*; and whether it be not an *offence* for thoſe of a *ſecond Edition* to make their *practices* claſh with theſe *allowed Doctrines*, let *Conſcience* judge: Onely give me leave to make this uſe of their Doctrine, *That 'tis extreamly ſinful for* Presbyterians *to ſeparate from the Church of* England, *their own celebrated Teachers being Judges.*

Our bleſſed Saviour refuſed not to communicate with the Twelve, though he knew *one of them was a Devil*; nay, he lived and died in *Communion* with the *Jewiſh Church*, though 'twas abominably corrupted; and was ſo *indulgent* and *graciouſly applicable* to ſinners, that the Phariſees call'd him a Companion and Friend of Publicans and Sinners.

One reaſon why Chriſt would be baptized among the *common ſort*, is rendred by *Spanheim* to be, that he might convince the World he was no Friend to *thoſe Opinions* that debarred men from *frequenting* the means of their *Salvation*, under the colour of their preſent *unworthineſs*: for *he came not to call the righteous, but ſinners*

ners to repentance. It is the works, not the workers of darkneſs, that the Apoſtle enjoyns us to have *no fellowſhip with. Judas* his perſonal action in eating the *Paſcal Lamb*, was an *abomination*; but it had no *reflection* on the Apoſtles that *communicated* with him: for as their *Faith* and *Piety* did not *ſanctifie* him, neither did *his iniquity* defile them, or *hinder* the benefit of their *worthy receiving*. The Sons of *Ely* were *practically* vitious, *ſcandalous* Sons of *Belial*; yet the People that communicated *with them* were *Gods people*. Scripture almoſt every where is loud in the commendation of *unanimous* Congregations; but ſtigmatizeth the *privacy* of a *disjoynted Separation*. 2 Sam. 12. 29.

Neither is it fit for you, my *diſſenting Brethren*, to complain againſt our *Parochial Communions*: for the deteſtation of our Offences, is no Priviledge nor Plea before Gods dreadful Tribunal, for the proſecution of your own, though ſpun with a finer thread: *First caſt out the beam that is in your own eye, and then you may ſee clearer to take the mote out of your brothers eye.*

Give me leave, I pray you, *out of love to your Souls and the Church's peace*, to be plain with you: for I must not, I dare not *flatter* you, by sowing *Pillows* under your Elbows, and calling you *pretious Souls, Gods elect people*, and your lawless Meetings the *Assembly of Saints*, until I have other proof of your immunity from the common Errours of others, besides your own naked affirmations. Do not delude your selves, nor suffer your *Hirelings* to do it: you are not *better* than others, but are *dayly* convicted of *Pride* and *Covetousness, Envy, Malice*, and *Uncharitableness, Dissimulation, Lying, Over-reaching*, and *Hypocrisie*, to every *discerning* eye; and the reason why it is no more *notorious* to the *common* view, is, you have learn'd the *knack* to *indulge each other in your close iniquities*, to *palliate* your *open* wickedness, and obscure your *own* Crimes by *defaming others*.

But were you as eminent *Vessels of Honour* as you would be *thought* to be, yet you may not disdain those that are but of *wood* and *stone*, as unworthy your Societies. 'Tis one of *Machiavil's* principles, that who they

stagger

ſtagger with one wrong, they muſt utterly caſt down with more; which you make your practice, if you endeavour not by uniting with us, to ward off that blow that from the hand of our common Enemy is falling on us. 'Twould well beſeem the *goodneſs* you pretend, to *return* and ſtrengthen us with your better Members (if you have any ſuch) that we may be thereby enabled to *mend* what is *amiſs*, and bleſs God for the mercy of *making men to be of one mind in a houſe, and ſtilling the Outrage of an unruly Faction*: And I beſeech God Almighty to endue us all with a ſorrowful apprehenſion of all our Offences, *that our Parochial Aſſemblies may be more ſober and devout, and that your ſeparate Churches may be more juſt, humble, and charitable; that we may all ſtudy to preſerve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace, all minding the ſame thing; and that there may be no Diviſions amongſt us, but that with one mind and one mouth we may ſerve the living God; that his Name may be glorified, our Sins purged, all our Souls ſaved, and avoid that wo that belongs to them that cauſe Diviſions and Offences. Ve Segregatori,*

Wo

Wo be to them that ſeparate themſelves, ſenſual, having not the Spirit.

5. Neglecting the ſervice of God in the publick Offices of Religion, under the *fallacious* pretext of being above thoſe ſubſidiary helps, or being better employ'd on the Lords day at home, is a moſt injurious and ſcandalous offence. *Do you provoke the Lord to jealouſie? are you wiſer than he,* that you uſurp a priviledge of doing onely *what is right in your own eyes,* in oppoſition to the all-wiſe commands of a *Deity?* Many *Opinioniſts* have done wickedly; but this in *pride and ingratitude exceeds them all. Wo be to him that is alone,* in the want of a ſpiritual Guide to *correct* his wandering, and *direct* his feet in the right paths. For ſo pernicious is an *affected* curioſity to be wiſer than our *Neighbours* and *Teachers,* that it forces men upon dangerous precipices to their deſtruction: Whereas abiding in their *Station* with a meek and humble *obedience,* in a plain and well-ordered Devotion, would have made them better men, if not more knowing Chriſtians. To decline *offences,* to be careful and conſcientious in our

ſeveral

ſeveral actions, is a purity that every man ought to ſtrive after; but to *cheat* the world into a belief that we do ſo, onely by *ſeparating* from our Brethren, is a *double iniquity*. You think you are above Ordinances; but I doubt it is nothing but a *wanton faſtus*, and *proud* temper of ſpirit, that makes you boaſt ſo: and if your own *arrogance* and *preſumption* would give you leave to lay aſide the *flattering glaſs* of Self-love, you would find you ſtood in *greateſt* need of them.

Object. But, ſay they, we can *better* employ our time at *home*, and *read* good Books, and *better* Sermons than our *Miniſters* can make. And in theſe *ſtudied Excuſes*, take themſelves to be no leſs *zealous*, but onely more *diſcreet* than their Brethren, who do not the like; when indeed they are guilty of *folly* and *wickedneſs*: Of *folly*, in aſcribing as great applauſe to our *private* Devotions (which loſe their *vertue*, and have no promiſe of *audience*, being done in *oppoſition* to God's publick Worſhip) as the united Oriſons of religiouſly diſpoſed perſons in Gods Houſe of Prayer: And of *wickedneſs*, in offering *Sacri-*

ledge

ledge for *Sacrifice*, robbing God of one duty, and paying him with another; with-holding the *greater*, and yet would seem conscientious in the *less*. Whilst thus contemning the *Precepts* of Heaven, and the *Communion of Saints*, in doing their *own* Will, they lose the benefit of both: *Who hath required these things at your hand?* Religion is not a thing left to the *arbitrary* fancies of men, to cull out from that *diversity* with which the World abounds, what best pleases themselves; neither are the *ways* and mediums of the *exercise* of it, put into their power; but as *God* is the Object of Worship, so the *means* and *manner* by which, and how he is *honoured*, and his Servants *benefited*, must be circumstantiated by himself; *his* Will, and not *ours*, must be the sole and adequate Rule. All Ordinances do not work *necessarily*, as the Sun enlightens the sable Skies; nor *physically*, as having an *inherent* power to produce their effects: but they are operative by the *sacredness of their Institution*. Be wise then, O Christians, in maintaining a *venerable* esteem of our *Church*-devotions, where God by *solemn*

lemn Prayer is invoked, *the Word preached*, and *the Sacraments rightly and reverendly administred*; being *as Babes for hunger and thirſt after them*, though not for knowledge and underſtanding in them. 'Tis a no leſs *common* than *dreadful* obſervation, that thoſe that leave the *Church-Aſſemblies*, do at laſt bid adieu to *Religion* alſo: Which that we may prevent, 'tis expedient *we forſake not the aſſembling of our ſelves together, as the manner of ſome is*, but account it a ſpecial favour from God, when we may *congregate* our ſelves *freely* to *worſhip the God of our Fathers*. And that our obedience may keep pace with the mercy, let us provoke one another to the diſcharge of this duty, ſaying, *Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the houſe of the God of Jacob, to pray before the Lord, and with praiſes make his Name glorious*. But alas, we might rather expect the *removal* of this *Bleſſing*, than the continuance thereof, for our exceeding *faultineſs* and *negligence*. God hath given a long and happy reſt to the Land of our Nativity, with advantages of giving our attendance at *the poſts of the doors of the Lords*

Lords house: We are not driven, like the Primitive Christians, *of whom the world was not worthy*, to assemble by stealth in Dens and Caves of the Earth, being persecuted, afflicted, and tormented; but the Gates of the *Lords House* have been open to us, and we have or might have had free access *to his Altars*. While other Nations have heard the terrible noise of *Cannons*, and the *dismal* effects of War and *Blood-shed*, the shreeks of *Widows* and *Orphans*, we have had the musick of Bells calling us to the *House of God*, and there the melody of *Psalms, and Hymns, and spiritual Songs*. We read in *Acts* 9. 31. that *the Churches had rest through all Judea*; and what use did they make thereof? Did they grow *careless* and *wanton*, kick against the *Breasts* that gave them suck, and spurn at those *Knees* whereon they were dandled? Did they *contemn* Ordinances, *slight* the Sacraments, *throw contempt* upon Prayer, and *despise* Prophecying? Did they lose their *first love*, and neglect the *good opportunities* which God gave them for their increase in Holiness? No, *they were edified, and walked in the fear of the Lord, and were multiplied.* Oh

Oh let us follow these pious Examples, in loving the place *where Gods honour dwels*, and answering the end for which they were appointed. He that frequents the place of Gods Worship, hath an *early* Title to a *Blessing*: for though many are found of God that *sought him not*, yet few or none ever *sought* him but they shall find him, though it be in the last Watch of the night: Nay, sometimes those who have had *ill designes* in going to Church, yet God hath made it *work for their good*, and of unwilling Auditors, framed willing and real Converts. St. *Augustin* in a proud humour of carping, entred the Church of St. *Ambrose*, but departed with a broken and bleeding heart: And who can tell but God may work as great a change on you, if you would not fly the means that God hath appointed, and wilfully neglect so great Salvation?

Let us at last, with the shrill Cock, not onely awake others, but clap our own sides. *A sinning Priest* is the fall of many, and the offence of all: It was a lamentable sight in the Prophets eye, that the very *stones of the Sanctuary were stumbling-blocks in every street*.

What

What doth embolden ſin more? what doth occaſion more ſpiritual falls, than the *foul Example* of a Church-man? who is heavenly in his Pulpit onely, but out of it given to all exceſs of riot. Oh how *barbarouſly* and cruelly do they wound *the Goſpel of our Lord Jeſus*, that preach it to the World, yet live as if they intended to go to Heaven ſome other way *than that which they teach their Auditors!* Nay, how is it poſſible his diſcourſes againſt ſin, and of Heaven and Hell, ſhould prevail to the *amendment of others*, who hath no care of his *own Soul?* for the love men have to their Vices, with a little help from the Devil, will eaſily perſwade them the whole is *fictitious*, or elſe that Heaven may be obtained, and Hell eſcaped, upon eaſier terms than the Prieſt tells them. How odious is the name of ſome *old Heretick* that hath fill'd the Church with Garboils and Blaſphemy? yet a *crafty Heretick*, in St. *Bernard*'s account, hurts leſs than a *leud Miniſter*: for Hereticks poyſon the Church but with Words, with giddy Tenents, and airy Speculations, which vulgar heads are not capable of; but

but each ſhallow Ideot will ſpy a *diſorder* in our lives, and ſooner follow our *Vices*, than maintain our *Opinions*. Divines may not think to carry it as ſome more wittily than truly ſay *Phyſitians* do, to have the *Sun* ſee their good deeds, and the *grave* abſcond their failures. No, my brethren, in the very walls of your houſes holes will be dig'd (as in the Prophecy of *Ezekiel*) *to ſpy out your ſecret abominations*; we cannot erre, but with the Snail, we leave our ſlimy filth to publick view; and what need we wonder, that our *Meſſages miſcarry*, and that the following flock are *tumbling down*, when their *Shepherd* is walking on the *edge of Rocks!* The River *Nilus*, as *Ariſtotle* tells us, hath a marvellous Stone in it, which if ground to powder, and given to a dog in ſome proper Vehicle, he will never be able to ſpend his mouth. Beloved, that harſh and auſtere life, as it were the Stone of *Nile*, if we ſoften it in liquor and voluptuous courſes; we quite loſe the vigor of our rebuking voice, the authority of our holy Embaſſie! What do we *ſweating in Pulpits*, if we love and practiſe the

Vices we declaim againſt! Divinity is a ſtrange kind of Phyſick, that effects no Cure, unleſs the *Phyſician* take it as well as the *Patient*. Who pulls a drowning man out of a deep ſtream with a dry hand? *Joaſh* his Arrow is then prevalent, *when the Prophets Arm is joyned to it*. A merry Souldier ſtruck a bird dead, from which his Comrades expected an Augury; ſaying, *How ſhould theſe ſilly creatures direct others, that cannot ſecure themſelves?* Who goes to a Barber for his bread, or to a Victualler for his cloth? and who will e're hope to receive direction for Holineſs from them, in whom there is nothing to be ſeen but Vice? We often complain, and it may be juſtly enough, of prevailing Faction amongſt us; but I am ſure nothing ſo much promotes their intereſt, as the *ſcandalous lives* of ſome that exerciſe the Miniſterial Function among us. The late incomparable Biſhop, Dr. *Jer. Taylor*, tells us, If we live Holy, our Doctrine will be true, and that truth ſhall prevail: but if we live *Wickedly and Scandalouſly*, every little Schiſmatick will put us to ſhame,

Sermon to the Univerſity of *Dublin*.

and

and abuſe our Flocks, and feed them with Colocynths and Hemlock; and place Hereſie in the Chair oppointed for our Religion. 'Tis an errour I know, a *fond* and *preciſe* errour, to think the Power of Gods Word, or the benefit of the Sacrament, ſhould be tied to the holineſs of *him that miniſtereth*. The Church in the *Canticles* is a Garden of Nuts: and if the Law of God that is planted here, be a Nut, we may ſafely eat the Kernel, though it come from a ſlovens hand. But truly it were to be wiſhed, that as the beautiful Heavens above our heads, are infinitely rais'd from earth, moſt different and oppoſite to her Centre; ſo the *Meſſengers* of Heaven were as far remov'd from the baſe and *ſinful* cuſtomes of this corrupt World, that inſtead of refreſhing Fountains, they were not Whirlpools to draw into danger ſuch as are about them: For as the *Ivy* and *Elm*, ſo the *People* and *Paſtor* grow together: *The people*, ſaith *Jeremy*, *take ill courſes*; and the reaſon is added in the next words: *The Prophet and Prieſt are profane men.* Therefore St. *Paul* thought it would ask more than an ordinary care; that it

Cant. 6. 11

Jer. 23.10.

Rom. 12.17

it would be a point of high prudence in us, to be *honeſt* men, not onely in the ſight of *God*, but in the eyes of the *World* alſo. Even Kings and Emperours have refuſed to quench their extreme thirſt with offered Water, when their Armies had none: they would not give an *example of Intemperance*: Why then do they that are *Sacred to God*, offer themſelves up to ſwiniſh exceſſes, with the *hazard* of ſo many *Souls*? The Whale eſpying her young ones at a low water, left in danger of the almoſt-dry ſhore, ſpouts nat. ſuch abundance of water upon them, that they can ſwim away in that artificial Tide. Did we truly regard the *welfare* of the Servants of *Chriſt Jeſus*, we would part with our Liquor, to *ſave their* Souls; we would abandon our delights, we would caſt out a drunken humour, to bring them again into the right way: and this we may learn from the *Indian Ocotochlus*, that having obtained his Prey by a great noiſe, invites other beaſts to feed on it; and when they are ſated, feeds on the reſt, that the poyſon wherewith he abounds, might not injure his meſ-mates by feeding with

with them. What a ſhame is this to us men! to us *conſecrated Prieſts*! that will abſtain from none of our Cups, from none of our Carouſes, from none of our vain delights, how *ſcandalous*, how infecting ſoever.

Truly, the beſt remedy I can commend unto us of the *Clergy*, who are *ſet upon a hill*, for religious *Example*, or the peoples *Scorn* and *Deriſion*, is a holy *Privacy and Retiredneſs*; at leaſt a *careful* choice of our *Company*. It is on record in *Leviticus* 14. 36. *That the Prieſts of God muſt not come into a polluted houſe*. They that are ſtrangers to the *courſe* of our lives, will judge of us by the *quality* of our company. We looſe our maſculine Gravity, and get *contempt* by *Familiarity*: We throw the *Honour* of our *Function* too prodigally into a *common boſome*, whiles we are ſeen mixing at *Feaſts* and merry meetings with *light and diſſolute* perſons. Our Saviour is obſerved never to ſtay long at *Capernaum*: it was a place of pleaſure, and, as *Druthmarus* tells us, was much haunted for that purpoſe, even by the Grandees of *Rome*. People are prone to take *offence* that *Church-*

men should share in those pleasures, or haunt those places, which yet themselves will freely enjoy. The damned Churl thought he must be a man of *another world*, that could convert his brethren. How shall Souldiers wound their enemies, if their Battalion stand not aloof? how shall we vanquish humane corruptions, if we keep not from them? St. *Paul wished himself separate even from Christ, for his brothers sake*, and shall not we separate from lewd and debauched Societies, for as great a matters doth it not hinder *men* in the way of Salvation, to be insensible of their own errings? and who will think that he goes *astray*, while his *Pastor* is in his company? should no scandal ensue, yet we pull a stain upon our selves: for he that sorts with uncivil men, shall hardly come off untainted.

While the Hebrew Multitude *sports* and *dances*, and worships a *golden Calf*, *Moses* is on the Mount with God, *praying*, and *weeping*, and interceding for the sins of the people. Let the *world* take her course, and pursue her follies; it is not for us, my *both Brethren*, it is not for us to mix with

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it: it would become us better to retire, and pray and weep for *publick offences*: not to lie as *ſtumbling-blocks*, and pull Gods anger upon us; but to *ſtand in the gap, and turn away his wrathful Indignation*: This were the way to be held in *greater account*, if we were leſs ſeen; to be more conſpicuous, if we were more hidden; if like the *Halcyon* birds, we came not out but to calm a tempeſtuous Sea, to remove troubles, and to bring peace to the vexed Conſcience. *Woe be to them that gad abroad on contrary errands*, even to raiſe ſtirs, and to cauſe offences. *Væ Sacerdoti*, wo be to the Church-man, by whoſe irregular Life the offence comes.

A *ſinful complyance* with the humors of Factious people, againſt the preſcribed Order of Holy Church, is another offence in *Clergy-men*; and too many ſuch *falſe bretbren* there are amongſt us. I ſpeak this to their ſhame, who like *Ariſtotles* firſt matter, are capable of any form which profit ſhall ſtamp upon them, and will be any thing, but what *they ought to be*: for in declaiming againſt abuſes, their meaning is not to have them

redressed, but by disgracing the present posture of things, to make a way for their own exploded Discipline; it being a certain Rule, that he which perswades a multitude that things are not as they ought to be, shall never want *Rewards*, nor *Auditors*; because under this fair and plausible colour, whatsoever they utter passeth for good and currant: These are the seeming friends that do more hurt to the Church of *England*, than her professed enemies: For open force is not so dangerous, as close dissimulation. In which respect it may be truly said of our Church, what is spoken of the Eagle in the Greek Apologue, Βλέπων δ' οἶστον εἶπεν ἐπτερωμένον, that died with the greater horrour, because she received her mortal Wound, with a Dart which was winged with a Feather of her own kind. These *serve not the Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly*, who creep to the Altar to devour the Church's Morsels, whilst privately they cry, *Down with it, down with it, even to the ground.* And though by Subscription they have given us an assurance of their Submission, yet by conforming with a *grudging conscience*,

out

out of neceſſity, and not with a ready mind, do more undermine the Churches Impoſitions, than the Nonconformiſts themſelves. They were unhappy in their Education, and (to prove they are like *glaſs*, which once being crack'd, does ever remain craz'd and unſound) do continue obſtinate and incorrigible, in their ſneaking obnuntiations: and accordingly when they are called to execute the Miniſterial Function, if they may do it ſafely, and without cenſure, 'tis ordinary without any remorſe, to the great *ſcandal* of poor people, and the hardning them in their Errours, upon all occaſions, to neglect the *Conſtitutions* of the Church: as for inſtance, if a zealous and *rich Male-content* deſires the Baptiſm of his Child may not be accompanied with *the Sign of the Croſs*, it ſhall, to pleaſe this Opinioniſt, be cenſured as a Romiſh uſe, and omitted accordingly; though the Incumbent is ſenſible, that very act renders him Perjured in the wilful breach of his Oath of Canonical Obedience. If a ſick perſon intreats the Prayers of the Congregation, the Office of the Church for that purpoſe ſhall be neglected

glected in the Desk, to shew how far the *Mimick* can exceed the Churches prescription in his *Extemporary* abilities in the Pulpit, And because the common Devotions of the Church must precede the Sermon, they shall be so irreverently hurryed over, that the people may easily perceive the *Heteroclite* performs them not as Prayers, but as an imposed Task, *for which he mourns in secret*. These are the slights which our Semiconformists use, to secure the good Opinion of the Factious, and to stigmatize their Zealous brethren with the Name of *Rigia Conformists*, who but conscionably perform what they apprehend to be their Duty. This gives us cause to complain with the Prophet, that *the Leaders of the people cause them to erre*, and deserve to be *sharply rebuked, that they may be sound in the Faith, and not tossed to & fro with every wind of popular oblimation*. For though they applaud themselves with the gilded title of *moderate Men*, they are in plain and true English, the *Pest* and *Bane* of our Church, whose *ambodextry* contributes not to the *strengthning* of the Edifice, but to the *demolishing* of the Fabrick

But

But did not St. *Paul* exhort men to Moderation by his own example, when he became *all things to all men, that he might gain some?* *Object.*

The sum of these words, so often and erroniously brought to justifie this *omnifarious principle*, imports no more than this, that he denyed himself in the *use* of his liberty, to gain those that were not acquainted with the *extent* of it; and dealt with all sorts of men in that way, which he thought most probable to convert them to Christianity, and keep them in the regular profession of it: Not that he *sneaked* and *dissembled*, and made weak people think that he was of their mind; and so *confirmed* them in their *mistakes* and *follies*. Nor had he any regard to the humours of *unreasonable* and meerly *captious* people, that will be finding faults upon no ground at all: this must needs be *unworthy of an Apostle*; for it is so of all inferiour *Ministers*, and likewise of every private Christian. Let me therefore intreat you, my brethren, who are too guilty in this particular, not to sacrifice your *Souls* to your *Fortunes*, nor repair a *subsistence* with the least breach *Answ.*

of

of your *Consciences*: But for time to come approve your selves faithful, by employing your best diligence to inform the judgment of others, (especially those that seem to have your Persons in admiration) concerning the Nature and Use of those things they oppose with so much fury; and not humour them in their petulant dislikes, and pernicious errours; nor suffer them to continue therein without your rebukes, either publick, or private, as prudence shall direct, and opportunity minister occasion: and this will be a means to pacifie the *God* you have *angered*, the *Consciences* you have *grieved*, the *Church* that you have *wronged*, and your *Souls* and *Brethren* whom you have *offended*. *Væ Semi-christiani*, woe to the partial Conformist, by whose sinful compliance the offence comes.

There be little ones in the Family too; little ones in a literal sense, such as our Saviour was now pointing unto: and here I must bring you forth the *Guardians* of Youth, *Parents*, and *Pædagogues*, and *Heads* of Families, who either by negligent nurture, or naughty examples, are guilty of

of an *Offence*. What an offence was it in *Noahs* Family, to ſee the old man ſo drown'd in his exceſs! How is *Cham* heightned with ſcorn and deriſion, *Shem* and *Japhet* dejected with ſhame and grief, at the ill example of their aged Father!

As water follows the track of your fingers end, ſo young children with the leaſt word or deed, are drawn away: *I ſpeak that which I have ſeen with my Father, and you do that which you have ſeen with your father*, ſaith our bleſſed Saviour. How ready are children to do that which they ſee done by their Parents! Beware therefore, all you that have attained this *Reverend* Name, that you let not your children ſee you do or ſpeak, that which they cannot do or ſpeak after you, but they muſt ſin. John 8.38.

The moſt powerful motive to ſin, and that which maketh a forcible entry into the Soul, is Vice armed with the authority of a Parent; be it Lying, Swearing, Drinking, or Gaming, that uſual, though dangerous Sport, which doth not ſo much recreate, as infect them with all ill cuſtomes, of lying, and couzenage, and the like abominations Many

Many times, on the other hand, Parents corrupt their children with too much *indulgence* and mildneſs towards them, never finding in their hearts to chaſtize them, upon a fooliſh conceit, they are too near our bloods to be controuled. What! do not vermine, and other ſuperfluities proceed from our own bodies, yet being noyſome are caſt forth? How ſhall *Amaleck* be chaſed away, if the Rod of *Moſes* be not lifted up? How ſhall growing corruptions be rooted out, when Diſcipline and due correction are laid aſide? it was this plunged King *David* in a world of Woe; for cockering one of his Sons, he felt the loſs of two: Had *Amnon* been chid by his Father, he had not perhaps been murthered by his Brother. Yet ſo far are many from obſerving theſe things, that they rather cheriſh them in their faults, hearing their leud words with applauſe and ſmiling, as the tokens of a pregnant Nature; which fond *indulgence*, as it is ſtill *pernicious* to children, by unſinewing their minds and bodies into all kind of Luxuary, ſo it proveth many times no leſs diſaſtrous unto Parents, who

who are commonly moſt grieved with thoſe whom they breed moſt wantonly: Then feeling the ſad truth of *Syracides* his Obſervation, *Cocker thy child and he ſhall make thee afraid, play with him and he will bring thee to heavineſs.* He that will let his children alone till they have *Animum conſilio ac ratione firmatum*, a fixed and ſetled judgment, ſhall find evil habits ſo fixt and permanent, that good counſel will be too eaſie a remedy. Eccluſ. 30. 9.

'Tis another offence in point of Nurture, that they who would not lay the Fruit of their Orchards on a dank floor where it would rot and putrifie, will yet ſuffer the Fruit of their Loyns to be depraved and corrupted in *bad company*, which is the plague & bane of all Goodneſs; whoſe poyſonous leaven more infecteth, and ſinketh deeper into the ſoul, than all the precepts of Virtue and Godlineſs can do on the contrary: Such Parents are like the *Eſtrich* that is hardned againſt her young ones; who provide not for their children *the ſincere Milk of the Word, that they might grow thereby*: But from the time

time of their being washt in the Laver of Regeneration, take no more care, but expose them forthwith to such lusts & conversations, as are much more wild and savage than those beasts * in the comparison; to which they cannot choose but be a prey. They strive indeed (as the *moding* term is), to educate them into *men* betimes; that is, make them *conversible* and *bold*: and since for that they must engage them into frequent company, where they see and hear mens follies, that I say no worse, by that means they come to have their understandings stored with nothing but the modes and sins of Conversation; filled with froth and mud, for want of religious principles being instill'd and wrought into their minds *before these evil days came on.*

* Lam. 4. 3. Job. 39. 14.

'Tis another offence in point of Nurture, that young ones for durty respects are forced to a course of life either in the Church or Kingdome, which they neither affect, nor are fit for. A man would think the maid that let in St. *Peter* to a warm Hall, and a good fire in a cold night, had done him an high curtesie, but it proved

proved a manifeſt injury: for that very maid drew him firſt to the foul ſin which he ſhortly after committed. So men think they have fairly acquitted themſelves in Offices of love and care, if they can bring up a child to be a Scholar. Nay, the violence of ſome rigorous Pedant (who, I verily think, is as deep in our Saviours wo, as any other) ſhall make him one whether he will or no: and now an Advowſon is bought for him, *the maid hath opened the door*: worldly policy and covetouſneſs hath brought the youngſter into the *high Prieſts Hall to the fire-ſide*; but how oft doth ſin and offences follow! your Scholar perhaps hath neither body nor brain fit for his Function; and then like cruel *Palamedes*, you have but laid your child before *Ulyſſes* Plough to be run over; or like our Lords Tempter, you have but led him up to the *Pinacle* of the *Temple* to get a fall. This might have been prevented, if you had gone to work like the old *Spartans*; they would feel the palms of a mans hand, whether they were hard or ſoft, whether he were like to be a painful man, ere

they would chooſe him into a publick Office. We ſhould do as much in the tryal of *Wits* and *Inclinations*, ere we mark out a little one for his profeſſion: for many times the Kingdom is robbed of a *good artificer*, and the Church over-charg'd with a *bad Miniſter*.

In Heads of Families 'tis an offence that there is no more care took of a Servants Soul: the Maſter * impoſes his Vices upon his whole Family, as if they were to be the badges and cognizances to witneſs whom they belonged to; as if they thought it a diſparagement to their qualities, to go to Hell without an honourable Retinue. Hence diſorders and drunkenneſs are winked at, as if they made for the Maſters credit; as if Bounty could not be ſeen but in a Deluge, or Hoſpitality ſtood in ſtaggering; that many of them are wholly kept with Kitchin drudgery, or wordly employment, from the ſervice of God. *Væ patri, Væ patri familiâs, Væ lactantibus!* woe be them that give ſuck, if they bring up their babes no better; woe to the Parent, to the good man of the houſe, by whoſe

* Gent. Calling.

whose ill example or loose Government the *offence* comes.

There are offences we see in the *fails of Superiours*, there are offences too in *the fails of the religious*. As pilferers regard not empty Cottages, but prey and break into rich houses to rob and spoil; so that cunning tempter bestirs himself most to rifle such hearts as are richly fraught with the graces of God: and many times his desire is attained; for through those *relicks of corruption* that still reside in the best of us, we are too prone to stumble into the paths of sin. Certainly, Religion it self getteth a blot in the fall of a just man; how is the Name of the Lord blasphemed, when the *man after his own heart is found an Adulterer?* let him therefore *that thinks he stands* sure, let him that *professes the Name of Christ* with zeal and ardour, *let him take heed lest he fall*, lest the prophane *Philistins* rejoyce, and uncircumcised hearts triumph over goodness it self, in the fall of her zealous Votary.

None so much detriment Religion, as those that profess a believing in Christ, but in their conversations *de-*

ny the Lord that bought them. Now what is this, but to act the Heathen under the Honourable name of a Christian, and offend more heinously for being invested with that Sacred Title? as the higher our Prerogative is, so much the greater is our fault. The very Religion we profess, is an aggravation to our sins; *he that knows his Masters will*, and squares not his life accordingly, does but load his Soul with the greater guilt and more intolerable punishment. There may be some excuse for ignorance, but the contemptuous and wilful sins of professors, will not obtain an easie pardon; *to him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin.* Jam. 4. 17. With what face can we look up and call our selves by Christs Name, who are shamefully upbraided by the practice of a *Pericles*, *Socrates*, and *Aristides*, who are accounted Heathens and Barbarous? what prodigies of baseness do we Christians make our selves, upon the account of our *scandalous practices*, whose holy Religion laies undispensible obligations upon its followers, only to think upon and to do *whatsoever things are honest*, *what-*

whatsoever things are just, whatsoever are of good report: and it is heartily to be wished, that men would not pride themselves in the *mistaken* signs of Grace, and think their condition good, only because they have perswaded themselves to believe so; but would endeavour to be *true and real Christians*, that the Name of God and Religion be not evil spoken of for their miscarriages.

Lastly, Men and Women offend one another, *by that wanton garb of Apparel they have taken up.* Light Weeds I know are accounted but a slender fault, but why should not our Pulpits arraign that which *Esaias* did? how doth that noble Prophet lift up his voice like a trumpet, proclaiming an heavy woe to those *that draw iniquity with cords of vanity?* To steal a silken string were no great Robbery; but how if a rowe of Diamonds hung upon it? how if on these things we count but light and vain toyes, monstrous iniquities do depend? Pride and haughtiness, oppression and envy, scandal and lust, what goodly Patrimonies do they not exhaust? what works of mercy

do they not devour? what honeſt eyes do they not offend? what hearts do they not batter? O God, what do we mean to indanger one another? why do we kindle the flame of Luſt in anothers boſome? ſhould our own hearts be innocent, yet we draw ſuſpition and envy upon our ſelves. Our bleſſed Saviour would have us *wiſe as Serpents*, and 'tis a piece of the Serpents wiſdom, that coming abroad to drink, he leaves his poyſon at home, leſt other Creatures periſh by his infection, that drink at the ſame Spring. Let us, my brethren, be thus wiſe; does any *infectious evil* reſide in our Souls, any *poyſon of Aſps* lurk under our tongues, any *foul enormity* appear in our lives, any *unjuſt violence* defile our hands, any *ſcandalous Weeds* hang on our backs; either ſpit your poyſon out, or ſo ſmother it, that it hurt none but thy ſelf. Was not young *Jacob*, ſaith St. *Ambroſe*, even then an happy man, when he was turned out to the wide world, when he was fain to forſake his Countrey, and Friends, and his Fathers houſe? how happy a Voyage did that forlorn wanderer make, that thus ſaved his

own

own life, and his Brothers innocency? get thee gone, O man, get thee gone from thy brothers sight, if there be ought in thee *that offendeth his eye, or woundeth his Soul*; and that for *thy brothers sake, for thy Saviours sake, for thy own sake.*

First, for thy Brothers sake: for by thine offensive carriage *thy weak Brother perisheth.* Methinks every word is a new enforcement; offend him not, for he is *thy Brother*; offend him not, because *he is weak*; offend him not, because *he perisheth by it.* The *Jews* that sought our Saviours life, would be thought *Abrahams* Children; but Christ fetcheth their Pedegree from Hell; *they are of their father the Devil, who was a Murtherer from the begining.* How was the Devil a Murtherer? he came not with a Sword or Poniard at his side, but whispered a wicked word, and killed us all: he killed our bodies, he killed our Souls too, when our fore-fathers were tempted to sin. Now if those that sought the bodily death of our Saviour, were in this the brats of that murderous Feind, how can we think better of them that seek the destruction of

1 Cor. 8. 10.

Joh. 8. 44.

Souls, ſince it was of the Soul too that *the Devil was a Murtherer from the beginning* ? By killing a man, thou doſt but rob him of that *Breath* which is common to him with other Creatures; but by leading him into a vicious courſe, thou ſtrippeſt his *Soul* of that life of Grace, which the Angels of Heaven are more happy in than in their natural being: murther the *Body*, and thou takeſt but his *Soul* from it; but miſlead his *Soul*, and thou takeſt away his *God*.

2. As for thy brothers ſake, ſo *for thy Saviours ſake too*, take heed of offences, leſt thy weak Brother periſh for whom Chriſt dyed. Conſider, O Man, ſaith holy *Bernard*, if the Son of God gave up his pretious Blood to redeem the Souls of men, do not they perſecute him worſe, who rob him of his *purchaſed Souls*, than the *Jews* did, who ſhed his pretious Blood? 'tis one of the Laws of God, that if a ſtack of Corn, or Corn-field, had been burnt up, he that kindled the fire was to make amends for the loſs. For a whole year the poor Husbandman had took pains for that hopedi creaſe; but it was not one, nor

two

two, nor three, but thirty three years together, that the Son of God laboured hard to get a crop of Souls into his Garner: what fearful *Agonies* did he go through! what a *bloody ſweat* bedewed his face, that theſe fruits might proſper and grow! and rather than go without this fruit, he would give his life for it: every Chriſtian Soul is (as it were) a ſheaf of this harveſt, which after ſo many toylſome endeavours of that careful Husbandman to bring it to maturity, if thou ſhalt now ſcorch and burn up, by miſ-leading a man firſt into the crooked paths of ſin, and at laſt plunge him into the unquenchable flames of Hell; hath not the Lord of the Harveſt Reaſon to look theſe conſumed ſheaves, this ſpoyled crop, this waſtful detriment ſhould be made good? and how this reſtitution ſhould be made, God Almighty hath directed in another caſe: *If a man dig or open a pit, and an Ox or an Aſs fall therein, the owner of the pit ſhall reſtore the price of the beaſt.* By drawing thy brother to ſin, thou haſt opened a *bottomleſs pit*, in which his Soul is everlaſtingly plunged: and Exod. 21. 33.

ſince

ſince thou canſt not reſtore that periſhed Soul, thou muſt be accountable to God *for the price of it*; and what was the price of thy Brothers Soul, but the pretious blood of the Son of God? let me intreat you therefore to conſider in time, that it is no petty driblet, no trifling arrearage thou runneſt into, but it is thoſe *invaluable drops of thy Saviours Blood* thou art now guilty of: and with what payment can'ſt thou wipe out ſuch a ſcore! why, if there be none elſe, it muſt be ſuch a recompence as the *Moſaical* Law exacted, *a life for a life, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a burning for a burning, a wound for a wound.* Haſt thou been an helper of thy Brothers deſtruction? a Soul muſt go for a Soul, a burning for a burning; thou that haſt brought his Soul within the reach of thoſe endleſs torments, canſt look for no leſs to be *the portion of thine inheritance*, than to be caſt irrecoverably into the mercileſs and devouring flames of Gods everlaſting diſpleaſure.

3. For thy own ſake, give no offence: for as *Moſes* loads him with fearful curſes, that ſhall *remove the*

bounds

bounds of his Neighbours land; ſo the Law of God hath fenc'd in the Souls of men; and he that makes them common, which that Divine rule had incloſed, ſtands liable to the ſeven curſes of the Son of God, *woe be to that man*; and thus we find it of old: for as they that intend to deſtroy any devouring beaſts of prey, can do it no better way than by killing thoſe that are great with young; ſo Almighty God hath always took vengeance on the Parents and Authors of ſin, that he might root out the young cubs in their Dams belly.

When the *Jews* were conſulting what to do with him that gathered ſticks on their Sabbath-day, Gods Oracle inſtructed them *to ſtone him to death*, becauſe (as *Theodoret* ſtates it, though the fault in it ſelf were a light one) he was *the firſt that offended in this kind*: the firſt man that violated that Sacred Law,& in his miſ-leading act, as in the Womb of a ſhe-Wolf, the future tranſgreſſions of others lay bleeding. For this cauſe, when that vile Traytor *Judas* had hang'd himſelf, *his bowels guſh'd out on the ground*, becauſe he was the *firſt* man that laid

wicked

wicked hands on the body of Christ. Now when that bloody Wolf had devoured the consecrated sop, methinks all those indigested Gobbets unworthy receivers take in, were now contained in his belly; God therefore provides that belly should be presently ript up, and those bowels gush out, that these horrible profanations, even in their Dams belly, might receive their Deaths wound. The Serpent, saith *Chrysostom*, was punish'd worse than the woman, the woman worse than the man; *Isabel* that devis'd the mischief, worse than *Ahab* that took away the vineyard: so thou that art the moving cause of anothers destruction, must look for an heavier torment than those thou hast seduced: the people of God were plagued for sinning with the Daughters of *Midian*, but the *Midianite* was worse plagued for laying those *stumbling-blocks* before the people of God.

What a spotted Chronicle attends that Son of *Nebat*, *Jeroboam*, he that set up his glittering Calves to keep the people from the Temple of God! this scandalous affront was so taken to heart,

heart, that almoſt in every page it is complain'd of: whenſoever the ſlips of other Princes fall into mention, *Jeroboam* is cry'd out of as the ring-leader; *Jeroboam the Son of* Nebat *that made* Iſrael *ſin.* So hateful to God was the offenſive Idolatry of this man, that even long before he rejected the Tribe *Jeroboam* came of, *he choſe not the Tribe of* Ephraim (as the Pſalm ſpeaks) and *Theodoret* venters to tell you why, Becauſe it was of this Tribe *Jeroboam* deſcended, who pluck'd away Ten Tribes from the Worſhip of God. Even in this life the plagues of God meet with ſcandalous ſins, a blemiſh'd name, outward miſhaps, and the fierce ſting of an accuſing Conſcience. But our Saviours woe implies more, *the laſting torments of another world*; and therefore he ſays, *'twere better a milſtone was hanged about thy neck, and thou caſt into the Sea*, than theſe offences were given; for that Maſſy piece could only ſink thy body to the Seas bottom, but leud and offenſive courſes will at laſt drown both Body and Soul too in the Sulphurous lake of Hell-fire. Pſal. 76.67.

Now

Now to keep off the blurs of *following offences*, or the woes of *offences already come*, I adviſe men to three things; *Reſtitution, Circumſpection, Mortification.*

1. Firſt, in caſe of offences already given, I adviſe *Reſtitution.* For can we think Almighty God takes more care of our Silver, than of our Souls? no! one Soul is of more value with him, than the wealth of the whole world: if then he will have *Zacheus* reſtore that baſe Metal that was unjuſtly taken away, how much more doth he look ſome amends ſhould be made for a pretious, for an immortal Soul? have thy publick aberrations given the world an offence? let thy publick amendment proclaim thee to be a new man. As thoſe Eaſtern *Sages* while they ſtay'd with *Herod*, loſt the ſight of the Star, but when they left *Herod* met with it again: ſo if thou haſt loſt the ſplendor of thy good name, by wallowing in a known ſin, recover it again by forſaking thy vitious courſes. Haſt thou drawn men by thy leud ſuggeſtions? draw them to God by thy good Counſels; if that fail, by thy fervent prayer: if

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the ſame parties thou canſt not recover, bring in others inſtead of them; as, if thou haſt borrowed ſo many Crowns and couldſt not repay the very pieces, it is enough if thou return an equivalent ſum. But thou wilt ſay, It lies not in my power to do this, I ſhall but get mocks, and do no good. Let not that obſtruct thy holy endeavours; for whether they turn or no, thou ſhalt be no looſer; the God of Heaven is a gratious paymaſter; and as the hired labourer that hath digged in the garden, or held the plow, hath not his payment deferred till the flowers blowe, or harveſt appear, but is immediately diſcharged, though thoſe proſper not: ſo if thou work in the vineyard of God by thy good Counſels, and holy examples, whether the fruit be anſwerable to thy pains, or not, thou ſhalt be ſure of *thy reward in heaven.*

2. Since theſe things are thus, ſince every ſtumbling-block we lay in our brothers way, doth but kindle our flame higher in the next world; *what manner of perſons ought we to be!* how holy and ſpotleſs in our converſe! how ſtrict and cautelous in our lives,

like

Ezek. 1. like those nimble Creatures in *Ezekiel*? what a sort of Eyes had we need have on all sides? how importunately should we invoke God, *to order our steps aright, that we hurt not our feet against the stones!* to keep the dore of our mouth, that we offend not with our tongues; and the windows of our eyes, that they gaze not on forbidden objects; to manacle our hands from violence and oppression, and restrain our feet from revenge! how diligently should we all watch, lest we enter our selves and draw others with us into temptation?

3. But if offences will come in spight of our circumspection, our Saviours Counsel may help all; do but cut off these offending parts with the keen razor of a *sober mortification*, and thou art safe; whether it be a wanton eye, or a griping fist, or a foot too swift in the pursuit of a bloody revenge; whether it be a licentious tongue, or a quaffing Weazand, or the lap of a scandalous weed; whatsoever irregular lust it be that *laieth a stumbling block, an occasion to fall in thy brothers way*, do but pare them away with the dreadful remembrance of their imminent woe, lest the offending part being now spar'd, thy whole body be afterward cast into Hell.

Now to God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, be ascribed all honour and glory, world without end. Amen.

FINIS.

THE CAUSE & CURE OF Offences: IN A DISCOURSE On *MATTH.* 18. 7.

BY

R. Kingston, M. A. Prebendary of *Sol*. and Chaplain in Ordinary to His Majesty.

1 Cor. 10.32. *Give no offence to the Jew nor to the Gentile, nor to the Church of God.*

Rom. 16. 17. *Mark them that cause divsions and offences, contrary to the Doctrine ye have learned, and avoid them.*

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Eighthly, And may we not rank thoſe in the Liſt of *Vocal Offenders*, from whoſe *unſavoury Jeſts*, *laſcivious Songs*, and *ſcurrilous Pens*, balls of Wild-fire are caſt abroad to inflame others; whoſe Bills, like tame Ducks, are ever dabling in ſtinking mud? How is our *tuneful Melody* ſcandaliz'd with *debauch'd Airs*; the harmleſs recreative Inſtruments of Muſick, transform'd into the Engines of Miſchief, our *entertainments* fly-blown with and looſe and abuſive Catches! I hope none will be ſo uncharitable to think I conclude all under *Offences* that *muſically* recreate *themſelves*, and delight *others*; no, for *Gods people* may be *merry* within the limits of *filial duty*: 'tis the *abuſe* onely that I declaim againſt, who am of *Ariſtippus*'s mind:

In libri Patris Sacris,
Mens quæ pudica eſt neſciet corrumpier.

But theſe empty ſounds vaniſh into Air, and reach but to few; we have found a way, with the publication of *obſcene Pamphlets*, to make our *offences* Eternal, and are become univerſal Bauds to the whole world. *Cupid* is Crown'd

Crown'd a *Laureat*, and that unchaſt *licenſe* which hath been expung'd and *hiſs'd* at in *Heathen Poets*, is hug'd and applauded in Chriſtian. The Jews have a ſaying, that when Scurrility is heard without, the door rots; the door! nay, the Audience rather; for *rotten communication is the quickeſt corrupter of good Manners.*

Can we think Almighty God beſtow'd our *breath* on us to no other purpoſe, but to blaſt his Image? Can we think our Creator intended us for nothing elſe, but to be the Devils bellows? Oh woful *merriment*, that *afflicts* our God, and *grieves* his Spirit and holy Angels, to make *ſport* for the *Devil* and his *infernal Crew*! Let *no evil commnication*, ſaith the holy Apoſtle, *proceed from you mouth*; and preſently adds, *Grieve not the Spirit of God.* Go now, unhappy *drols*, and think to delight your *fond* admirers with an *obſcene Jeſt*: but remember, that truly Religious hearts are griev'd; nay, the Spirit of God is *griev'd* with thoſe that thus *hazzard their ſouls*, to purchaſe the reputation of *Facetious Blateroons.* Hath Chriſt pronounc'd *weeping* and *woe* to them that *laugh*

now: How then can they think to eſcape, that do not only *admit*, but *cauſe* and *further* this vain and frolick exceſs. Oh lamentable and heedleſs *folly!* to kindle a *wanton* delight in ſome *looſe heart*, to feed a *laſcivious ear*, and make our company *merry*, we bring on our ſouls a *ſorrowful woe*. *Væ turpiloqui*, *woe to the ſcurrilous Tongue by whom the offence comes.*

Ninthly, Deriſion and Mockage is the laſt *offence* I ſhall arraign in the Tongue: For, *O fooliſh* Galatians, *who hath bewitched you!* ſaith the choſen Veſſel. As the grumbled Charm of a Witch, ſome think will ſtrike dead a little child, ſo the goodneſs of a weak Chriſtian, with every breath of deriſion is almoſt blaſted. How little a thing ſtaies a boat on the river, and ſtarties a horſe by the way-ſide! no leſs eaſily are we deter'd in a courſe of Goodneſs. Some frail *diſordered* man hath the ſymptomes of a growing *Cure* upon his Soul, has mew'd off his ſick feathers, and now begins to *ſtartle* at his former *exceſs*; to forbear his *brain-ſhaking Cups*, and *hell-invented Oaths*; has ty'd up his Tongue to the *good behaviour*, and impoſed on his Con-

Converſation the ſtrict Rules of Religion: and now the *fleering* drunkards make Songs upon him; the *ſcorns* and *taunts* of his old *Mates* lie in his way, and he *falls* again upon the ſame *rock of offence*. Another is *mildly diſpos'd*, and would wink at a wrong, but *hot-ſpurs* are hiſſing his *puſillanimity*; he ſhall be mark't out for a *Coward* and *Milk-ſop*, that dares not incur the guilt of a ſpontaneous *Murder*, to gratifie ſome beaſtly humour. Should a ſort of poor *Chriſtians* be redeem'd from the *Turkiſh Gallyes*, what would we think of him that ſhould endeavour to *betray* them again to their old *ſervitudes*? Is a ſoul *looſed* from the power of *Sin* and *Satan*, what a *horrid villany* is it to enſnare it again into that *Captivity*! Whoſoever he be, that thus nips the *buddings* of Grace, like the cruel *Egyptians*, he does but ſtrangle the Hebrew Babes that God would have preſerved; and like Tyrannous *Herod*, put Chriſt to death, when he is firſt *conceived* and born in a regenerate heart. But the moſt *degenerate* ſort of *ſcoffers*, and *dregs* of mankind, are thoſe that *ſcoff at Religion*, and de-

ride our hopes of *another Life*, as the Phantaſms of a melancholy *Prieſt*, or the Politick ſtratagems of ſome cunning Stateſmen, to keep people in awe. We are caſt into the very *Dog-daies* of Atheiſm and Ungodlineſs, and live among thoſe which ſcoff at ſuch things that are moſt *Sacred* and to be *trembled* at. Oh the frequent *darings* of *Divine* Vengeance, that continually pierces our *ears*, and wounds our *hearts!* and thoſe vented in ſuch *direful expreſſions, that the moſt deeply damned in hell could never be guilty of worſer.* Wonder not if this be the *Cordolium* of all that are religiouſly ſenſible in the land, if it puts them into the weeping Prophets *Iliaca paſſio, My bowels, my bowels, I am pain'd at the very heart*; for 'tis enough to raiſe a *paroxyſm* of grief and indignation in the holy Apoſtle, and make the *hearts* of good men *ſink* and *dye* in them, to ſee how *prodigiouſly* leud and impudent men are grown. Yea, thoſe *dull ſouls* who are inſipid and dreggy on all other arguments, are by the *Devils*, and the *Leviathans* help, grown eloquent in *abuſing God* and *Religion*, to magnifie their abus'd

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Corpuſcularean Philoſophy.

Tell them of a *God*, and they laugh aloud at your folly, who are ſo *tame* and *childiſh* to believe what you *never ſaw*; and pitty your *ignorance*, for being deluded by the *men in black*, into the *melancholy* thoughts of *Religion*. *Democritus* and *Epicurus* are polite Authors, and in better credit with ſuch, than *Moſes*, St. *John*, or St. *Paul*; and *Hobs*'s borrowed Hypotheſis, than the ſacred Volumes of the Old and New Teſtament.

Quis fando temperet à lachrimis?

They can ſolve the *Phænomena* of *Nature*, without the allowance of a *Deity*; and derive the *worlds* Original from a *Fortuitous concourſe of Atomes*. Thus theſe imperious *Atheiſtical* Dictators, boaſt themſelves the only men of *Learning* and *Diſcretion*; ſtigmatizing all others, as ignorant Ruſticks, and illiterate Buffoon's, that have nothing of *generoſity*, who dare not ſet their mouths againſt *Heaven*, and defie the Authority of their *Maker*. Now to blunt the edge of this *ſcoffing Wit*, which boaſts of ſo

eaſie a *Victory* over *deſpiſed Chriſtianity*; Pray conſider, that their onely argument is taken from *Senſe*, unleſs they enforce them with *Oaths*, the uſual Graces and Ornaments, and the only *proof* they have for ſuch *wild diſcourſes*; and are to be pitied and pray'd for, but not *diſputed* with, leſt we ſpread the *contagion*, having to do with ſuch as had rather *looſe Heaven*, than live *ſoberly*; and have no other reaſon why the ſay there is no God, but becauſe 'twould be well for them there was none. 'Tis a ſtrange deluſion that hath infatuated theſe abſurd Animals, that they dare ſport with the flames of Hell, in ſcoffing at God and Goodneſs, and the ſame moment *ſtartle* at their own *Shadow*, frighted with the noiſe of *Thunder*, and are as fearful of being *alone* in the night, as other *vermine* are of light and company.

O quam multos dominos habet, qui unum non habet!

Every ſurprizing accident *ſhares* them from their *Principles*; there being nothing more evident, than that the greateſt

greateſt Atheiſt is alwaies the moſt notorious Coward. Thus we read of *Antiochus*, when he enjoyed the conſtant ſeries of a ſmiling fortune, boaſted himſelf *Superiour to God himſelf*; but when the inconſtant Goddeſs withdrew her Beams, and appear'd unto him under a cloud of Troubles, he chang'd his note; for having received a fall out of his Chariot, and his inſolency curb'd by an immediate blow from Heaven, he could ſay then, as too many of our *Atheiſts* do upon the aſſault of a *diſeaſe*, and the fears of death (*Pray God it be not then too late*)

Juſtum eſt hominem mortalem ſubditum eſſe Deo.

It is meet and requiſite for mortal men to be ſubject to the immortal God. Tell me, I pray you, that pretend to be ſo great maſters of Reaſon, whether 'tis not more agreeable to the principles of right Reaſon, to believe a *God*, than deny it; if ſo, then give over (ye men of ſenſe) thoſe ſordid extravagancies, that render you *Clowns* to Heaven, *Burlesk* no more upon God,

nor

nor caſt diſgrace upon the *holy* and *bleſſed Trinity*: For if frail man compacted of infirmities is ſo jealous of his *Honour*, that (by the commands of Hell) he thinks himſelf oblig'd to *duel* him that ſtains it; How will God Almighty be jealous in taking *vengeance* againſt ſuch as blaſpheme his *Godhead*, neglect their own *Salvation*, and chooſe rather to venture their whole *Happineſs* in gratifying their corruptions, than provide for their own *Safety* by examining their *groundleſs ſurmiſes?* And *you that have better learned Chriſt*, be intreated to ſhun the Society of ſuch *ſcoffing Atheiſts*, who would *laugh* you into *eternal mourning*, and mock you from the exerciſe of Piety, till the Devil *claim* you by *Preſcription*. By no ſtratagem or device hath the Devil ſo much *diſheartned* from *Religion*, and *afflicted* men for it, as by *Scoffers*, who make themſelves the main promoters of his *Cauſe*, and advancers of his *Kingdom*: by no *methods* hath the Devil more *inſtructed* thoſe that would be bad, and *diſcouraged* others from being *good*, than by theſe *accurſed* inſtruments of Cruelty. When the

the Jews could not withſtand the miraculous coming of the *Meſſias* any other way, they took ſhelter in a *taunting proverb, Can any good come out of Nazareth?* When the convincing power of *Miracles* had proclaim'd his *Divinity*, and *the Works that Chriſt did had declar'd he was the Son of God*, they had no way to prevent believing on him, but *Is not this the Carpenters Son?* Thus alſo fares it with *Religion*, that they who have their minds *eſtranged* from it, from thence take an occaſion to *ſcorn* and *deride* it. But if nothing elſe can perſwade you to riſe out of *the Chair of Peſtilence*; See the examples of Gods *Judgments* upon *Scorners: Iſhmael* mocking *Iſaac*, was *baniſhed* the pleaſant land, and expoſed as a prey to forreigners: *Michal* mocking *David* for dancing before the *Ark*, was puniſhed with the *ſorrow* & ſhame of *barrenneſs*. *Machivel* that mocking *Atheiſt*, dyed in the priſon of *Florence*; and *Julian* that made *Chriſtianity a deriſion*, expired in a moſt hideous and *cruel* manner. Nothing is more juſt and equitable, than for the *impudent* in ſin, to be *daſhed* out of *countenance*, and to be beaten with their

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own Weapons; for *the Lord ſcorneth the ſcorners*, and will mock at their Calamities when they come, who mock'd at God before they was inflicted: take heed therefore you *offend none of God's little ones*, thoſe that begin to *taſt* ſweetneſs in the *Word of God*, and the promiſes of the *world* to come; but rather ſtrengthen the *weak* hands, and the *feeble* knees, and encourage all men in the way of Goodneſs. But Changelings ſometimes paſs for the Babes of Chriſt, and while I am pleading for the *Righteous*, I would not patronize a *counterfeit* in the ways of *malice* and *diſobedience*, in the ways of *guilt* and *diſſimulation*, (which many now take for the *ſtreight paths* of Chriſt). I think we do well to ſtop your courſe, and to *deride* your deviation: but far be it from us to *retard* you in the ways of *Jeſus*, *the good old way wherein you may find life for your Souls*; the ways that are ſtrewed with *Love*, *Peace*, *Meekneſs*, and *Humility*; woe be unto us if we call you not (as we do daily) to walk therein: but if any by *precept*, or *example*, put you from the purſuit of theſe real Graces, *Væ deridenti*, *woe be to that man*,

man, by whoſe deriding Tongue the offence comes.

The next member that upon arraignment will be found guilty of *Offences*, is the *Eye*; a part of the body endued with ſo much *excellency*, and withal ſo much *iniquity*, that I know not whether it may more invite your admiration or your ſorrow; for when the *heart* corrupts the *eye*, and the eye betraies the heart, it ſtains its own glory, by agreeing with the *mind* in the ſervice of Iniquity; it renders the eye an egregious offender: for if with a *greedy* aſpect it *looks* upon food, without charging the ſtomach, 'tis guilty of *Gluttony*; if on a woman to *luſt* after her, 'tis guilty of *Adultery*; if it beholds riches with *covetous* deſires, it hath committed *Robbery*; if on anothers *good*, with an eye of *evil*, it commits the ſin of *Envy*; which is the meaning of our Saviours reprehenſion, *Is thine eye evil, becauſe mine is good?* But as if the vice of the *husbandmen* were transformed into a virtue, ſinful man is continually *reviving* it, in repining that his *fellow laborer* in the vineyard that came in late, ſhould receive *equal* wages with himſelf, who

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like *Cæſar* and *Pompey* can endure no equal, nor ſecond to rival him in his victorious Atchievements: Hence it is that Envy is called the *green-ſickneſs of the Soul*, that feeding upon cinders, or rubbiſh, *contracts the ſtature*, impallids the body to a *hectick leanneſs*, and through default of the liver, ſpots the face with *gutta Roſacea*, *as the effigies of the man by whom the offence comes.* This is he that cannot endure the abilities of any, ſhould be admitted competitors with his *feeble* acquirements; thinks illuſtrious *merits* an upbraiding his own *defects*, and that he is lighted into envy by the ſplendour of his rivals virtues, againſt whom he hath no other quarrel, than what the *Affricans* have againſt the Sun, *Urit fulgore ſuo*; or what one had againſt *Demoſthenes*'s candle, onely becauſe it *ſtood in his light*. This ſin of *Envy* renders men more vitious than *devils*; for we nowhere read, that they envy one another: Beſides, their malice ariſeth from the want of that good which they have loſt, and theſe envy that good which another hath found. And now through the ſuggeſtions of *Malice*, the ſinner wracks himſelf with

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jealouſies and ſurmiſes, to perſwade himſelf each *Candidate* is his enemy, that he hath a greater ſhare in the love of the *Popularity*; and this puts him upon *baſe and ungenerous employments*, to ſatisfie an *unreaſonable* and *impatient jealouſie*; ſends him as a *ſpy* into every dark corner, to diſcover that which only dwells in his own *imagination*; and all this while he hath perhaps been fighting with his own *Chagrene Ghoſt*, and hath had no other enemy, than his own ill nature. This makes it a kind of *miſery* to be excellent, becauſe it is ſure to be attended with *malignity*; it being the conſtant guiſe of *poorer ſpirits*, thoſe *brats of mouldy clay*, to erect obelisks to their own *obſcure bearings*, out of the *ruines* of others: and ſince they are unable to raiſe themſelves to the eſteem of their adverſaries, they endeavour by Calumny (*or the exerciſe of their befriended, not acquired authority*) to bring them down to the ſame ignoble level with themſelves. This is a ſtone of *Stumbling*, and a rock of *offence*, for Chriſtians to malign each other: *for he that hateth his brother is in darkneſs until now; but he that loveth abideth* Joh. 1.2.9.

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in the light, and there is no occaſion of ſtumbling in him. But that which aggravates the offence, and makes the ſin become ſo *exceſſively ſinful*, is, that the only cauſe for which the *envious* man is enraged againſt his brother, is that *for which* Cain *ſlew* Abel, *becauſe his own works were evil, and his brothers good.* And that this hath been the conſtant practiſe of this deviliſh vice, will appear when we further conſider, that for this cauſe *Joſephs* brethren ſold him; and it was virtue in *David*, that provoked *Saul* to ſeek his life; and the *Ninevites* repentance, that diſtempered *Jonas*; for this cauſe (namely unparallel'd goodneſs) 'twas, that the Jews conſpired the death of our Saviour, and which made the Roman Governour endeavour his releaſement, becauſe he knew *that for envy they had delivered him.* This is even the nature of envy, to aſſault the *worthieſt* perſons, whoſe eminency ſhines beyond others in glorious Actions, but meddles not with ſuch as be of meaner quality. But to perſwade men from the practiſe of this unchriſtian and unmanlike vice, know, that Divine Juſtice hath

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appointed this ſin to be the torment of it ſelf; for Envy, like cankered Braſs, feeds upon his own ſubſtance.

Juſtius invidia nihil eſt, quæ protinus ipſum
Authorem rodit excrutiatq; ſuum.

But I ſhall rather preſcribe *Antidotes* againſt this poyſon, than ſhew the puniſhment that attends it: and to that purpoſe, if thou ſeeſt another abound in Learning, Judgment, or the like commendables, be not ſo envious to thy ſelf, as to be vexed at that which may better or inform thee, if thou wouldſt make a right uſe thereof.

If thou hear him defend the *Truth* with applauſe of others, let not a *perverſe* emulation tempt thee to maintain the contrary, to the *ſubverting* of the hearers: for there is, ſaith *Nazianzen*, a happineſs even to be *overcome*. And it is far better to be *honeſtly* vanquiſhed, and quit the field, than to obtain an inglorious *Victory*, with the ſhipwrack of true Religion. If thou ſee another endued with ſpiritual Graces, as *Virtue*, *Knowledge*,

Temperance, Patience; here is matter for thy *godly* Emulation, but not for thy bitter Envying: thou ſhouldſt ſtrive to *match* him in the exerciſe of holy duties, but not to damp his alacrity by malitious detraction. According to our Saviours precept, *our light ſhould ſo ſhine before men, that they ſeeing our good Works, may glorifie our Father which is in Heaven.* Therefore let not thy envy be the cloud to *dim* the light of anothers works, and thereby hinder ſo much *glory*, as might redound to thy heavenly Father. Although ſuch a man were thy *enemy*, yet becauſe Almighty God is *glorified* by him, he ought to be thy friend: and now becauſe God is glorified by him, ſhall he therefore be thy *enemy? God forbid!* Remember whoſe work he is doing, and encourage his *faint* endeavours with the addition of thy ſervice, and help to effect what thou dayly prayeſt for; That *Gods will may be done on Earth* by thee, and thy fellow-ſervants, *as it is in Heaven* by the glorious Angels.

Chryſoſt.

The Tongue is now *wormed*, and the *Cataract of Envy* over the Eye is couch'd

touch'd; but I must lead you on with *Ezekiel* to more abominations, to more offences in our lives; they are of two sorts, *injurious* and *exemplary*.

First, The *injurious offences* are apparently indigitated in our Saviours words: for who receiveth his *little ones*, but their hopeful benefactors? and who on the other side gives them *offence*, but their *spiteful opposers*? And here our old Complainants are ready to commence their suit, in reckoning up the hard measures offered to their Zealous guides, who are exil'd their Pulpits, stript of their Maintenance, rated, fined, persecuted, as their word is; whereas the contrary is most evident, Being treated, through the kindness of some, and the remissness of others, more favourably than the Law allows, and their practice deserves. And when they fall under any pecuniary mulct or corporal restraint, *their punishment is of themselves*; they cannot be called *innocent Sufferers*, but *injurious Agressors*. I would to God they would once learn to saddle the right Ass: for, as St. *Augustin* said of *Sara* and *Hagar*,

the Maid did more perſecute the Miſtreſs by her *pride* and *ſaucineſs*, than the Miſtreſs did her Maid by the *ſeverity* of her diſcipline: and notwithſtanding the Diſſenters clamorous Charge, upon a *Melius inquirendum*, 'twill be found, that *Schiſmaticks* do more *perſecute and offend the Church*, than *holy Church* doth perſecute or offend them: and ſo unhappy conſequences have been the iſſue of their lucrous ingannations, that the Church better endured the *Swords* of *Tyrants*, than the tongues of *Schiſmaticks*: for while we *ſmarted*, Unity remained; but while theſe *Anticeremonian Bigots* are believed, the *Church* is obnoxious to ruine, by the *ſeeds of diviſion* they ſowe amongſt us.

But that which ſpreads the contagion, is, that the Schiſmatical tenents of ſome *Non-conforming* brethren, like *ill weeds* in a *fat ſoil*, have done greater miſchief through the good opinion men have of their *perſonal* Sanctity. *They are good men!* and (by a bad conſequence) *all they do muſt be ſo accounted.*

But what can the *pretence* amount to, when examin'd by an *intelligent* and

and *unprejudiced* ſoul? for 'tis not flouriſhing the banner of *goodneſs*, that can priviledge men from either errour or ſinning: neither ought the unreprovableneſs of mens converſe in other things, countenance their *Schiſmatical* opinions, or *Church-dividing* practices, againſt the light of divine Scripture, and right Reaſon. Let mens *Gifts* and *Graces* be as large as *they themſelves* would have it believed, muſt not men of honeſty live under Laws, *and ſubmit to every Ordinance of man for the Lords ſake?* Surely however they whiſper the contrary, they dare not ſpeak it aloud, leſt they be as openly convicted *to reſiſt the Ordinance of God, and purchaſe to themſelves Damnation.*

Theſe are the gildings and varniſh of thoſe ſelfiſh intrigues, whereby men of good hearts, but *weak heads*; and women, who have *weakeſt* judgments, but *ſtrongeſt wills and paſſions*, are cozened into a good opinion of theſe painted out-ſides, to embrace a Cloud inſtead of *Juno*, and forſake a *peaceable Church*, to be members of a *contentious Conventicle.* I take no delight in ſearching the wounds, or

diſplaying the faults of a religious Party; but in ſo noble a Cauſe 'twould be a ſin to hold my peace: *Meam injuriam patienter tuli, injuriam contra ſponſam Chriſti ferre non potui.* 'Tis a *deplorable offence*, that men of excellent parts and improvements, which might be eminently *ſerviceable* to the *Church of God*, ſhould abuſe their *learning* to the maintenance of a *Schiſm*; and inſtead of winning ſouls to Heaven, with *buſie* and *ill-boding* diligence compaſs ſea and land to draw proſelytes to a *party*. How many Kilns and Barns (the preſent threſhing-floors of diſcontented Jebuſites) are turned into *Trojan* horſes, from whence *publick* miſchiefs proceed! How many ſouls are *heedleſly* led by theſe ſtubborn and furious guides, into a bitter diſtaſte of their *common Mother* the *Church!* how many into a *Peeviſh* diſeſteem of their *able* and *pious* Inſtructers! yea, which is moſt lamentable, into a true *loathing* of their ſpiritual Food. But to return to *injurious offences*, caſt your eyes I, beſeech you, about you, and every corner will afford you ſuch, as under a *pretence of Purity*, root up the Vineyard

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of *God*, *affront Majesty*, *scorn Laws*, and pursue their *hateful designs*, with all the violence of *disloyal* and *affrighting* insinuations: whose deadly Talons (like the soaring Eagle) are onely bowed in (I fear) for want of an *opportunity* to prey and ravin. Another way of discerning the humour and malice of *injurious Sectaries*, is in the bitter *Colycinthos* they shred into the pots of those profits they relish not. Let some *Reverend Divine* but cross and discountenance *Schismatical* fancies; let him but walk in the waies of *Meek obedience* and *Humble* concord, he shall be *defam'd* in their Conventicles, and called either a Tory, a Papist, or at best a Papist in Masquerade; he shall be *defrauded* in their Contracts, excluded their Houses, deprived utterly of all their *Contributions*: his heart shall be *broken* with dayly *affronts* and oppositions; his intents *cross'd*, and his desires hinder'd: the *Reverence* due to his *Function* shall be detain'd; and by telling the Vulgar he is a man of Arbitrary Principles, he preacheth Obedience to Laws, he is therefore of a persecuting spirit. And by these arts having prejudiced

the Factious many, nothing but the *ſalt* ſcorn of a *ſour face* ſhall be caſt upon him. His domeſtick *neceſſities*, and painful maladies, ſhall be ſo far from any ſhare in their *aid*, or *pity*, that they ſhall rather become matter of *mirth* and *mockage* amongſt them: his *grave* ſhall be made for him, and his *knell* rung in the votes of unmerciful people, e're *God* takes him away: Nay, which is worſt of all, his *holy Labours* ſhall be deſpiſed, his *Rebukes* ſlighted, and his *Doctrine* tax'd; his *Church* either quite *forſaken*, or thinly reſorted to. And are not theſe *offences* enough to ſtumble one; Nay, to hinder the courſe of Chriſts Goſpel? to keep many *good wits* from entring upon a *Function*, that, in the *conſcientious* diſcharge of it, brings nothing but *barrenneſs* and *vexation*? Truly, if they can ſhew us no better fruit of their *boaſted* holineſs, like the barren ground the *Hebrews* are told of, they have a curſe at their elbow. *Væ injurianti, Wo be to that man, by whoſe injurious dealing the Offence comes.*

But injurious offences cannot be thought all that our Saviour meant; for

for when he puts thoſe caſes of an *offending Eye*, and *Hand*, and *Foot*, we underſtand it not of our own members, as if they ſhould offer us violence. We proceed therefore to the laſt block, the *exemplary offence*; and this I will devide into three parts, and in them ſhew you,

1. That *Offence* may be given by the *indiſcreet* management of a good work.

2. By the *unreaſonable uſe* of an indifferent thing: And

3. By the *foul example* of a work in its own nature evil.

1. In the performance of a *good work* commanded by God, we are not to *balk an offence*, but as much as in us lies to remove a *miſpriſion*. 'Tis better an offence ſhould be given, than any of Gods ſacred Truths ſhould be betray'd. *Si aliqui ſunt infirmi, & ſcientia deſtituuntur, non oportet ut nos eorum cauſa Chriſtiana libertate fraudemur*: what though ſome are weak, and deſtitute of knowledge, there is no reaſon that *we* for *their* cauſe ſhould be cheated of our *Chriſtian liberty*. *We muſt not regard their offence, who refuſe to be healed.* Pet. Martyr

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unleſs we our ſelves become ſick. In thoſe works which fall not under a *ſtrict command*, we are to *do* that which we cannot *omit* without an *offence*; and though 'tis certain ταντὶ λόγῳ ἀντικεῖται λόγος, nothing can be ſo ſpoken or done, but it may be ſpoken againſt: yet when we conſider that the *Ceremonies* of our Church (about which Diſſenters make their pretence to quarrel) are but *few* in *number*, are *ſignificant* in their *nature*, and *advantageous* to the grand deſigns of Religion in their *uſe*, our Chriſtian liberty conſiſts in this, *That we have leave to do them, without the imputation of Sin*: nay, 'tis ſo far from being a *Sin* or *Offence*, to comply with our neighbors in ſuch plainly innocent uſages, and *harmleſs* cuſtomes; or with the *will* of our *Governours*, when they command us ſuch things, that it would be both *ſin* and *ſcandal* to refuſe ſo to do: for our refuſing to *comply* with either of theſe, can hardly proceed from any better principle, than a *proud affectation of Singularity*, or at beſt from *a ſuperſtitious Scrupuloſity*. St. *Paul* would have us abſtain from *every appearance of evil*; but wills us not to

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think every thing evil which *ſome men* call ſo; for in that *good old way* which the covenanting Conſiſtorians & blind Papiſts call *Superſtition* & *Hereſie*, we may *truly* worſhip the God of our Fathers: *for God judgeth not as man judgeth.*

2. In the uſe of *indifferent things*, we have two lights to ſhew us our way; *Faith*, and *Charity*; Faith pondering the *nature* of the thing it ſelf, to ſettle the *wavering* conſcience: Charity preſcribing the *time* and *manner*, leſt we incur *danger*, and our weak brother *offence*. Truly a ſcandal taken from the uſe of *indifferent things*, if it proceed *meerly* of weakneſs and ignorance, is to be *pitied* and tender'd. The *Apoſtle* is full of warnings, ſerious warnings, *that we lay not a ſtumbling-block before our weak brother, that we cauſe him not to periſh for whom Chriſt dyed:* and for his own part avers, he would *eat no fleſh* as long as he lived, rather than *it ſhould ſtick in another mans ſtomach.* But doth he mean that his *weak brother* ſhould keep him *for ever* thus cautelous? Or doth he yield to their *infirmity* onely *ſo* long till the *truth* be taught him? Yea verily: for if our *weak brother* af-

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